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Heart of the gospel

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THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL.

By Arthur T. Pierson.

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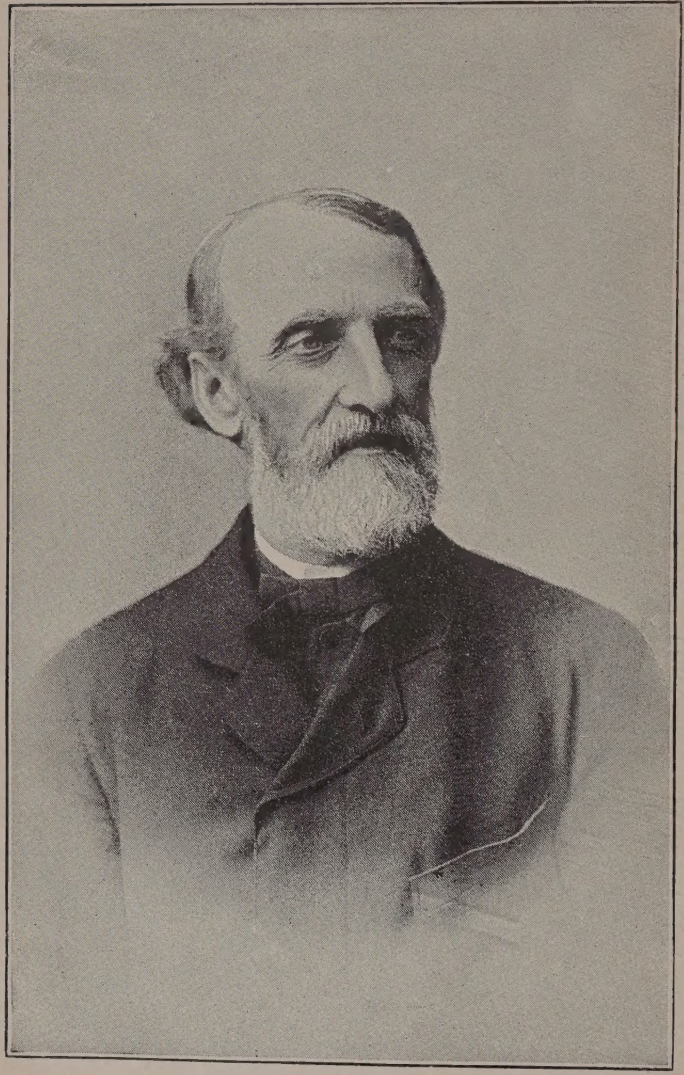

Arthur J. Peaslee

The Heart of the Gospel

TWELVE SERMONS

DELIVERED AT THE

METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE,

LONDON, ENGLAND.

BY

ARTHUR T. PIERSON,

AUTHOR OF "THE CRISIS OF MISSIONS," "THE DIVINE ART OF PREACHING," ETC.

NEW YORK:

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To the Memory

OF

CHARLES HADDON SPURGEON,

THAT VALIANT SOLDIER OF THE CROSS,
WHO FOR FORTY YEARS WIELDED WITH SUCH POWER
THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT, WHICH IS THE WORD OF GOD,
AND BRAVELY BORE THE BANNER OF THE CROSS,
UNTIL IT FELL FROM HIS DYING GRASP,
THIS VOLUME OF SERMONS,
WHICH REPRESENTS A HUMBLE EFFORT TO
PERPETUATE HIS TESTIMONY TO THE SAME OLD GOSPEL,
IS MOST LOVINGLY DEDICATED.

PREFATORY NOTE.

THIS book aspires to no pre-eminence as furnishing homiletic models.

Twelve sermons are here put in print, which were preached in the Metropolitan Tabernacle, London, in the Autumn of 1891, while Pastor C. H. Spurgeon was seeking recovered health at Mentone. They were never written, even in part, and are reproduced almost verbatim.

If any interest invests them, it is almost wholly circumstantial, owing to the unique conditions under which they were spoken. Many and marked as are their defects, it pleased God, in a remarkable degree, to use them both to convert sinners and confirm saints.

There was a call for their publication, and it was so general that it was thought best not to disregard it, and it is devoutly hoped that He, for Whose sake they were prepared and preached, may have even yet some further errand for them to accomplish. With this prayer, they are sent forth in His name.

ARTHUR T. PIERSON.

METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE,
LONDON, *June*, 1892.

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THE LESSON OF PENTECOST.

I.

THE LESSON OF PENTECOST.

"Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for. I ask, therefore, for what intent ye have sent for me."—Acts x, 29.

THERE was a little Pentecost that day in Cæsarea. It is a great mistake to suppose that the first Pentecost at Jerusalem was the end of blessing; it was only the beginning. There are some who tell us that we should not pray that the Holy Ghost may "descend" upon us, because the Holy Ghost has already come down once for all, and he cannot be expected to come down again. Is there not here, possibly, a grave mistake? It will be observed that the Holy Spirit, who descended upon the disciples on the Day of Pentecost in Jerusalem, was also "received" by Samaritan converts, and likewise "fell on all those that heard the Word" that day in Cæsarea; and the same Holy Ghost came down also upon the disciples in Ephesus who had not before "heard whether there were a Holy Ghost or no." Now, if the Spirit of God could come down thrice in Apostolic days after

the Pentecost at Jerusalem, why may the Holy Ghost not "come down" again this morning upon us who are here assembled?

There is a distinction between the work of the Holy Spirit in the conversion and sanctification of a human soul, and the work of the same Spirit *upon* us as the servants that have already received his power *within*. Those little prepositions, "in" or "within," and "on" or "upon," seem to be always used in the New Testament, and, indeed, in the whole Bible, with very great discrimination. The first two prepositions refer to that work of the Holy Ghost which is *permanent* in the soul of a child of God; but the other prepositions, "on" and "upon," refer to the *temporary* influence of the Spirit in bestowing the special endowment of power upon us during the period of our service. So that, while we may not expect or pray that the Holy Ghost will come down again in the sense of saving and sanctifying power within us, since he already dwells there, we may expect that he will come down in the sense of power for service, a new anointing for the tongue of the minister of Christ, and a new anointing for the ear of the hearer. Let us seek to get hold of this thought at this time, for it is the key of whatever work I seek to do among you in the name of the Lord. I regard the Pentecost at Jerusa-

lem as the type and the prophecy of Pentecosts all through the history of the church of God. That was a kind of "firstfruits"— a little gathered out of the harvest field—a specimen and a prophecy of the harvest that was to come, and not as ripe and fully developed as the whole harvest would be when it was perfectly matured. So, in this sense, we are justified in looking for other Pentecosts in history that shall not only be like the first Pentecost at Jerusalem, but greater than that in results, as that was greater in results than any work of the Spirit that went before.

If intelligent disciples were asked what is the greatest lack in the church of God to-day, I am sure the answer would be—the greatest lack is the loss of the power of the Holy Ghost. It is not so much a lack of ministers ; some of them, doubtless, might as well not be ministers at all. It is not a lack of learning, for we have many learned ministers; and I have sometimes thought that a little of their learning might be dropped out without any damage. It is not a lack of churches; we have hundreds and thousands of them. Nor is it a lack of members, for we could drop a few out of our rolls without any harm to the church of God. What, then, is the lack? Why, it is the absence of the spiritual power ; the loss of that anointing of the Holy Ghost

that makes the tongue of the minister of Jesus Christ most of all learned in the school of the grace of God. It is the lack of converting and sanctifying power attending the Word. In brief, it is the lack of the Spirit's gracious influences coming down like rain from above.

Now let us notice again that the laws of power are fixed laws. There are certain great powers of the universe that we call by the name of "forces." For instance, there is gravitation, the tendency of a falling body toward a center. There is electricity; there is steam; there are light and heat; there are adhesion and cohesion. All these are powers in the natural world; and they all obey laws; that is, they move within certain limits on a fixed track, just as much as a train of railway carriages moves on its double lines of steel; and you can never utilize the power, off its track, any more than you can have an engine moving properly and effectively if it does not move on those steel rails.

There is one great law that pervades the universe of God; and I would emphasize that law by repetition, that you may write it down on the tablets of your memory, namely, that *whenever you obey the law of the power, the power obeys you:* but that whenever you disregard the law of the power, the power refuses to obey and serve you; and may sometimes not only oppose

and defeat you, but absolutely destroy you. If you get into proper relations to the fire you are warmed and filled with its glow ; but if you get into wrong relations to the fire, it burns and blisters and consumes you. If you get into right relations with steam you may harness the steam to your carriages on the land, or to your vessels on the deep, and they will bear you in safety to other parts ; but if you disobey the law of the steam it not only refuses to serve you, but explodes with tremendous violence and tears you limb from limb. Just so about electricity ; just so as to magnetism, and all other natural powers of the universe. Now, let it be reverently said, the Holy Ghost is the greatest of all the powers of the universe. The Holy Ghost acts according to the laws of his own power ; and if you will obey those laws he will serve you, but if you transgress the laws by which that Power of God is evermore guided in his ministry among the saints, he will refuse to bless you. (Acts v, 32.)

This introduction is necessary that we should get to the doorway of this great theme. Here we have power from heaven falling upon all those that heard the Word, so that they were immediately brought to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, and were baptized into the company of the faithful. So seldom do we be-

hold any such manifestations of the Holy Ghost in our modern assemblies that we might almost say that such power has been withdrawn from the church at large, at least in great manifestations, and it is only here and there, and now and then, that the Spirit of God is exhibited after the manner of the original Pentecost.

The vital question arises—What are the laws or conditions of this divine power? What is the track along which the Spirit of God moves when he bears such blessing to the souls of men? It will repay us richly, if, at the outset of this brief period of service among you, having asked what is your intent in sending for me, we all, as spiritually minded disciples, seek an answer according to the Word to that other question concerning the conditions of blessing.

Let us, looking at this incident, see what were the conditions of this power as here illustrated. God is the same: he never changes. It is man that changes. Suppose you have a fixed object here, and you move around it; the object does not change; it is in the same place and plane; it preserves the same attitude and position; but you change your position, and, therefore, your relative position with regard to the object. Now God is the one great fixed Being of the universe. He is eternally and unchangeably the same; and if he appears different, and is relatively different

to us at different times, it is because of our different attitude and position with respect to him; so that if we can find out the conditions of power in this tenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, and can reproduce those conditions this very day in this Tabernacle of God, we have reason to expect such a manifestation of the Holy Ghost as they had in the house of Cornelius the centurion. May the Lord, therefore, guide as we explore this great question, and show us the obvious conditions of the Holy Spirit's power! We must not only examine these conditions, but must carefully keep out any other admixture if we want this power. In chemistry, when you try to analyze certain substances, if you introduce some foreign matter, whether it combines with the rest or not, you may neutralize the effect of the other substances. Now, if we mingle with these conditions of power some foreign element, as it were, we might neutralize the power or prevent its exercise. So let us be very careful and follow the lead of the Scriptures and of the Spirit of God.

I. In the first place we have here a messenger with a message and a prepared mind and heart.

There was a *messenger*. Mark who he was. Peter, a man, a very frail man, who dared not stand up before a maid and say—"I am Jesus' follower," but three times—and the second and

third time with increasing emphasis of oath and blasphemy—declared that he did not know the man. The messenger was Peter.

Why not an angel? There is an angel in the narrative. In the beginning of this chapter we read that an angel appeared to Cornelius. Why should not that angel have told the centurion about the way of salvation? He was there; Peter was in Joppa; at least a day and a half's journey from Cæsarea. Why take those three days to send men to Joppa, to lodge over-night and bring back Peter with them, when the angel of God was there on the spot, and could have taught Cornelius "words whereby he and his house might be saved"? Although the angel came into that house, there was a limit to angelic ministry. All he was permitted to say was, "Send to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter"—the very disciple that denied his Lord—"and *he* shall tell thee words whereby thou and thy house shall be saved." Do you not suppose that the angel would have been glad to have told the good tidings to Cornelius? But the Lord would not allow it. I say that advisedly, because, whenever an angel appears in the New Testament, he is never permitted to tell the story of redeeming love. In the eighth chapter of the Acts, we read that the angel said to Philip, "Go and join thyself to the chariot of

the eunuch." Why did he not go himself? Again, in the twenty-seventh chapter, we find that the angel appeared to Paul in a vision of the night, and said, "God hath given thee all them that sail with thee." Why did not the angel appear to the crew and make that same announcement.

> "Never did angels taste above
> Redeeming grace and dying love."

The Lord wants *testimony*, and hence *witnesses;* and because the angels never sinned and never fell, and so were never saved by Jesus Christ, God crowds the angels back, and thrusts you and me forward. However poor a preacher, I can preach the gospel better than Gabriel can, because Gabriel cannot say what I can say, "I am a sinner saved by grace." So any believer may preach better than he. And Peter could preach better, for the very fact that he had denied his Lord, and been forgiven for his denial; the poor backslider could preach better to other backsliders because he had had that experience. So the Lord says, "When thou art converted"—or brought back to the way of duty—"strengthen thy brethren," that are liable to fall in the same way that you fell. The Lord wants witnesses. What is a witness? That Saxon word "Witan," from which the

word " witness " comes, means *to know.* If you only know, and have a tongue with which to tell what you know, the Lord says, " You can be my witness "; and if you know never so much, but know not what it is to be saved by grace, God will not have you for a witness. You could not witness if He would, for you have nothing to witness. And one reason why so few, even of disciples, appear to have any real witness for God is because they know so little about the Lord themselves. Our knowledge limits our testimony. A herald is the mouth of a message, but a witness is the mouth of an experience. Lord, give us not only the message, but the experience, that we may be true witnesses for thee !

Peter had a mind prepared to deliver his message. Peter was a kind of ecclesiastical aristocrat. He felt that all people, outside those Jews to whom he belonged, were a kind of barbarians, just as Thales, the wisest and best of the Greeks, thought of all people outside Greece. In other words, Peter had what we sometimes call *caste.* You know what the caste spirit is. " The Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans," as the woman of Samaria said to Jesus. " No dealings " ; that meant that a Jew would not show a lost traveler his way, or point him to a spring when he was athirst, if he was a Samar-

itan. That is the caste spirit on the broadest scale. Peter was an aristocrat; and it became necessary that God should take his aristocracy out of him, and break his caste spirit, before he could go and preach the gospel to these Gentile Romans in the palace of the Cæsars. A sheet was let down from heaven by four corners, and in it were all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, wild beasts, reptiles, and fowls of the air; and Peter was told to "rise, kill, and eat." But he said, "Not so, Lord; I am a Jew, and nothing that is common or unclean ever entered my mouth." The Lord said thrice, in order that he might learn the lesson: "What God hath cleansed that call not thou common." Did you ever see anything of this kind of churchly aristocracy and caste spirit in our own day? Did you ever see any of those high-minded people who look down with scorn and contempt on what they call "the working classes," "the masses," or the "outcasts," or "the people in the slums?" We can never preach the gospel with power until we get over the caste spirit. Let me say to every Christian worker in this great congregation, if you do not get cured of your spiritual aristocracy, God never will give you the power of the Holy Ghost in reaching souls. Peter could not go down to that household in Cæsarea and preach the gospel with

power to them until he had learned that any man, woman, or child in the wide world to whom God sends the message of his gospel is, before God, on an equality of right and privilege with the proudest nobles of the earth.

II. We turn from the messenger with his message and his prepared mind to the *people who heard the message.* In the first place, there were none of the ordinary conditions associated with power. There may be thousands of people in this Tabernacle this morning, and we are wont to connect power with a multitude ; but here was a Pentecost when there was just a handful of the people gathered together, the kinsmen and near friends of Cornelius. Yet there was in one respect a greater display perhaps than on the day of Pentecost. We are not told that at the Pentecost in Jerusalem all those that heard the Word were converted ; but we are told here that the Holy Ghost fell on " all those that heard the Word "—the men, women, and children gathered together there—every one of them received the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Then notice, again, that these hearers had also a prepared mind for the message. That is especially important. When Peter came in, Cornelius said to him, " Now, we are all here present before God to hear all things that are

commanded thee of God." Was there ever another minister of Jesus Christ who had an audience that addressed him in that fashion? Suppose I should hear from this great assembly to-day in this Tabernacle one unanimous voice, "Here we are all present before God to hear all things that are commanded thee of God." It would not be possible even for so weak and unworthy a messenger to preach gospel tidings without power, if you would all give such audience as that! Did it ever occur to you what a contribution a hearer makes to the eloquence of the preacher? A great deal is said and written about power in the pulpit, but we do not hear much about power in the pew. Mr. Gladstone says that eloquence is the pouring back on the audience in a flood what the speaker first gets from the audience in vapor. A beautiful definition of eloquence! The sun draws water from the little pools; from the open cup of every little flower that holds the dew there goes up vapor. It arises into the upper atmosphere where it is colder, and the vapor is condensed first into clouds, and then into rain; and then it comes down in a flood on the dry and thirsty earth. So the preacher of the gospel, when he speaks with power, draws from the hearts of the hearers whom he addresses, the dewdrops, which come to him as

in vapor, and he condenses the vapor and pours it back upon them in a flood of sacred eloquence. So many a minister who does not know whence his power comes owes it to praying, sympathetic, loving hearers. Charles H. Spurgeon owes to this people under God much of the inspiration of his ministry. I remember when I preached here incidentally on the 7th of December, 1889, I was met beforehand by these dear brethren that surround me on this platform, and one who is no more with us, but is in the glory, and there for twenty minutes they besought God in prayer that he would help me in preaching the gospel to this people ; and I felt the sense of being divinely uplifted and upborne by those prayers. A man cannot help preaching a good sermon when the people are thus praying for him, and when their hearts are open to receive the Word, and they can say in the presence of God, "Here we are before the Lord, all waiting to hear whatever is commanded thee of God." How different the conditions when people come together, with critical and itching ears, demanding of the minister that he should say only what their prejudices or prepossessions incline them to hear ; who want "smooth things" delicately said, not the sword of the Spirit, sharp on the edge and piercing on the point ; who like to hear something

in place of the gospel, some discourse on good roads, or good laws, or good magistrates, or sanitary regulations, or the Czar of Russia, the Sultan of Turkey, or some such theme, instead of the precious gospel! Even a mighty man of God has little power in a congregation whose hearts and minds are not ready for the reception of the truth. For observe God never forces the citadel of a human heart. May I repeat that? *God never forces the citadel of a human heart.* He will stand and knock, but there must be a hand within that opens, there must be a receptive mind and an obedient will, or God enters not to take possession.

Notice another thing: these hearers, few in number as they were, who had their hearts and their minds prepared for the Word of God, had introduced into their little assembly nothing, the nature of which was calculated to *divert attention from the truth* of the living God. There was simply a room in the house of Cornelius. They came for one purpose—to hear what Peter had to say in God's name. There seems nothing to divert or distract their minds, or hinder the power of the Spirit. Can you not understand why there is so little power in some churches of God to-day? You go into one assembly, for instance, and find, instead of the primitive apostolic praise in which the whole

congregation join, an operatic quartette choir, with perhaps a very costly organ, with star singers, such as you hear in the concert hall, singing without spirit and without understanding, having no sympathy with what they sing, and simply conducting a performance in the name of worship. You go into another congregation where the minister delivers an essay or oration, or lecture, and it would take ten thousand such, condensed and boiled down, to give you one single drop of gospel essence. The Holy Ghost never tolerates idols in his courts. If you will import into the place of worship that which takes the place of Almighty God, his praise, prayer, message of the gospel, and the single mind that looks to him for a blessing, you forfeit the blessing because you do not obey the law of the power. I owe it, as a tribute to the work of God in the Tabernacle, to say that I believe the success of this great church is owing to nothing more than to this, that the man who preaches the gospel here never preached anything else for forty years. Moreover, every time a hymn is sung the people sing, and even if the rear part of the congregation chases the fore part of the congregation in a vain attempt to keep up in time, the question is, How does these mingling voices salute the ears of the Lord God of Hosts. If such singing

offends the canons of art it does not violate the beauty of holiness; if you do transgress the laws of what some cultivated people call "æsthetics," you do not transgress the laws of the power of the Holy Ghost; and so important is this testimony to simple worship, that it were better that some calamity happen to this Tabernacle itself than that it should ever be perverted to an unsanctified, secularized art.

If we really desire to keep out of divine worship everything that turns attention from God, or hinders the power of the Holy Ghost, we are divinely taught what to do. Moses, on behalf of God, gave the Israelites a command that they should not lift up the tool of iron on his altar, but that they should worship with an altar of unhewn stone. And so even the altar of burnt sacrifice, put into the temple courts by Solomon, was extremely simple in its whole construction. Ahaz, that idolatrous king, looked on that altar, and said, "This is very bald, this is a very bare kind of worship;" and when he went to Damascus and saw there one of the carved altars of Assyria, he said, "I will displace the plain brazen altar of sacrifice in the Temple courts, and will have this beautiful æsthetic altar of Damascus in its place." So he brought it and put it there, and crowded God's plainer altar to one side. But remember this, the Holy Ghost

left the holiest place when the Damascus altar came into the courts of the Temple. I can take you to-day into more than one nominal place for the worship of God where such a Damascus altar is found with its secular and profane art in place of the unhewn altar of God, and you may penetrate to the innermost recesses of those churches, and the pillar of cloud and fire is not there, and the Shekinah of glory does not there shine. And I can take you on the Western prairies of America to a little log hut that is used as a place of worship, where nothing but the gospel is preached, and nothing but the praise of God is sung, and where prayer arises from stammering lips into the ears of the Lord God, and I will show you a congregation where the Lord adds "daily to the church such as shall be saved." The church of God is doing the maddest thing that the church of God could do—trying to make up for the lack of the Holy Ghost by the presence of a worldly fashion, art, architecture, furniture, garniture, and secular influence, and she can never make up for that lack by any such substitutes. An angel came down at a certain season and troubled the pool of Bethesda, and, after the troubling of the waters, whoever first stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had. Now, suppose the angel had not troubled the pool, and that

the Jerusalemites, anxious that the healing properties should still be found in the water, had called all the quack doctors of Jerusalem together, and had said, "Now, drug these waters. Pour in your medicine, and let us make up for the absence of the angel by the presence of your drugs!" That is what the church of God does, when, instead of waiting for God's angel to come down and trouble her pool, or when the angel refuses to come because idols are found in God's courts, the doctors of the world are called in to drug the waters, and make them healing waters; but it is all in vain.

My fellow disciples, you have called a very frail man from the other side of the sea to preach for a little season to you the gospel of the grace of God. I do not know anything but Jesus Christ, and I want to know nothing else. Now the question is, for what intent have ye sent for me? Let me ask you three questions, and answer them in your own hearts; first, are you *prepared* for a blessing yourselves? secondly, are you *expecting* a blessing yourselves? and thirdly, are you *depending upon the Holy Ghost*, and on Him alone, for the blessing?

A story is told about Mr. Spurgeon—and I have no doubt of its truth—that one Sabbath morning after the service was over, and the people came forward to shake hands with this

beloved man of God, one young minister of the gospel came and said to him, "Mr. Spurgeon, I should like to ask you a personal question." "Well, what is it?" "I am a minister of Christ, and I have been preaching for several years, but I have not had much fruits of my preaching. Yet I believe I preach the truth in a right spirit, but the Lord does not give me souls." "Well," said Mr. Spurgeon, "you do not expect that every time you preach the gospel the Holy Ghost is coming down upon the people to turn some soul to Jesus Christ, do you?" "Why, of course not." "*Well, that is just what I thought*," said Mr. Spurgeon; "according to your faith be it unto you." Do you expect a blessing? then you will prepare your heart for it. May I say that I expect a blessing? I never would have come those three thousand miles across the stormy Atlantic, and have left all the work in America that was at my hands, to preach in this Tabernacle, had I not been confident that God called me, and meant, through this poor ministry of mine, to second the glorious testimony of Pastor Spurgeon, and that I should come to a prepared people. And I want solemnly to say that, if we do not have a blessing, it will be our own fault; for God is great and rich in mercy, and the Holy Ghost is even now hovering over this

assembly like a dove at a window; and if we will open the window the Holy Dove will come in.

There are some unsaved souls here this morning: may I say one closing word to you? What is the reason you are not saved? If there is one of you that has come here to hear whatever is commanded of God for your soul, and you will at this moment open your hearts to the incoming of His message, you will go out of this place saved. Let us try the sacred experiment. I will read, as the conclusion of this address, Peter's sermon on that day in Cornelius's house: and so we will have the same message in prayerful dependence upon the same Spirit; and, while I read these few words, let all of you that love Jesus Christ, and are His disciples, in your hearts send up prayer to God that every unconverted soul in this house may hear these words whereby such hearers may get a present salvation.

"God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly; not

to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to those who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the judge of the quick and dead. To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.

"While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all of them which heard the Word." In the eleventh chapter, at the fifteenth verse, he tells us, "*As I began to speak* the Holy Ghost fell on them as on us at the beginning." That is to say, Peter never finished that sermon. He got far enough to declare the conditions of salvation, and the Holy Ghost—may I say it with reverence!—was so divinely impatient to bless those hearers that he would wait no longer. He crowded Peter aside, as though he would say to him, "You have said enough; the gospel is given to these people," and immediately "the Holy Ghost fell on them that heard the Word." Now the same gospel is preached in your ears. How simple it is to receive it!

In the Jerry McAuley Mission in New York, at 316 Water Street, there is a man who has been for years conducting with great success this mission among the outcast drunkards and

thieves of that degraded portion of the city. I heard him tell the story of his own dissipation, how he went from an occasional wine-bibber down to an habitual drunkard, and then, as a hopeless sot, frequenting the lowest class of drinking houses till, having no more money, he was kicked out of doors. One night he found his way into a low haunt, where they simply tolerated him because the rest of them were so drunk that they could not eject him from the premises. He sat on an empty whisky barrel in the corner of that drink shop. The curse of twenty years of dissipation was so telling upon him that he felt as though he were dying; and he thought of what he had heard years before, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He had not enough sobriety to conduct a process of thought or of reason; he could not pray intelligently, for he could not put incoherent and babbling words into prayer; but he thought to himself, "I have heard it said, if one will only look to Jesus, He is so desirious to save a poor sinner, that he will take the look for a prayer"; and he yearned to look toward Jesus, but thought, "Where shall I find Him?" He felt himself falling from the hogshead to the floor, and he said, "*I will fall toward the cross*"; and that fall toward the cross saved him! My friend,

if you get so much willingness in your heart this morning to be saved, as that if you were falling you would fall toward the cross, then there is salvation for you ; and now, just now, in your heart say unto the blessed Saviour, "I do open my heart, and take thee in as my Redeemer from the curse and condemnation of all sin !"

THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL.

II.

THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL.

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."—JOHN iii, 16.

THERE is one text in the New Testament that has been preached from oftener than any other in the Bible. It has been the foundation of great revivals of religion, like that among the Tahitians; or that among the Telugus in India, where two thousand two hundred and twenty-two people were baptized in one day, nearly five thousand people in thirty days, and ten thousand people within ten months; and where, even during the year drawing to its close, nearly ten thousand more souls have been baptized. It is a wonderful text. Luther called it one of "the little gospels." It is this (John iii: 16), "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

You will naturally wonder what there is in that old text that is new. I have found some-

thing that was very new to me, and which also may be to you. I suppose that I had read that verse tens of thousands of times, and yet, a little while ago, as I was led to preach upon that text, I sought of the Lord a clearer view of it, that I might glorify Him by bringing forth out of His treasure things new and old. After reading these familiar words over, perhaps a hundred times, prayerfully asking for new light and insight, there suddenly came to me this absolutely new discovery, as though one, looking up into the heavens, should see a cloud swept away from before the stars, and a new constellation revealed. It flashed on my thought that there are *ten words* in the verse that are quite prominent words, such as "God," "loved," "world," "whosoever," and so on. Then a little more close and careful search showed those words in a hitherto undiscovered mutual relation: *the ten words were in five pairs.* There is one pair of words that has to do with the two persons of the Godhead—God the Father, and God the Son. There is a second pair of words that has to do with the expression of the Father's attitude or posture toward this world—He "loved," and He "gave." Then there is a third pair of words that refers to the objects of the divine love—"world," and "whosoever." Then there is a fourth pair of words that shows us what the

attitude of man ought to be when God's love and gift come to his knowledge—"believe" and "have." Then the last pair of words points us to the extremes of human destiny: the result of rejection, and the result of acceptance—"perish" and "life."

Often as I had read this "gospel in a sentence," I had never seen before that singular relation borne by the main words in the sentence; and, so far as I know, nobody else had seen it before; for it is one of the beautiful privileges about the study of the precious word of God that the humblest believer who asks the grace of God and the guidance of the Holy Spirit in studying the Holy Scriptures, may make a discovery for himself that nobody has ever made before, or if so, without his knowledge; so that it is still his own discovery.

Let us look at this text in the light of this fresh arrangement of the thoughts which it contains. To my mind, it is one of the most remarkable discoveries that it has ever been permitted me to make in the study and exploration of the hidden treasures of the Word of God.

In the first place, "*God* so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten *Son*." There are two of the persons of the Godhead. Many persons are troubled about the relation of the Father to the Son, and of the Son to the Father.

They cannot exactly see how Jesus Christ can be equal with God if He is God's Son ; and they cannot see how He can be as glorious as the Father, and how He can be entitled to the same honor and homage and worship as the Father if He proceeds forth from the Father, and comes into the world. But let us seek a simple illustration. It is said in the introduction of this Gospel according to John, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." What is a word? It is the expression of a thought that lies in the mind. The thought is not visible, the thought is not audible ; but, when it takes the form of a spoken word or a written word, that thought that was invisible in the mind, that you could not see, or hear, or know about in any other way, comes to your eye on the printed page, or to your ear through the voice of the speaker. And so my invisible thoughts are coming to you now through these audible words. The word is so connected with the thought that it is the expression of the thought. The thought is the word invisible ; the word is the thought visible. Now Jesus Christ was the invisible thought of God put into a form in which you could see it and hear it ; and just as the word and the thought are so connected that if you understand the word you understand the thought, and if you under-

stand the thought you understand the word; and as the word would have no meaning without the thought, and the thought no expression without the word, so Jesus Christ helps us to understand the Father, and the Father could not make Himself perfectly known to us except through the Son. But, again, we are told that Christ is "the Light of the world." Suppose I should say, "In the beginning was the light, and the light was with the sun, and the light was the sun." The sun sends forth the light, and the light proceeds from the sun; yet the light and the sun are the same in nature and the same in essence, and the glory of the sun is the glory of the light, and the glory of the light is the glory of the sun; and although the light goes forth from the sun, it is equal with the sun, shares the same glory, and is entitled to the same valuation. We cannot think of the one without the other.

In this text not a word is said about the love of the Son for sinners, nor a word about the Son's offering of Himself for the salvation of men. What is the common, old-fashioned notion that we sometimes find cropping out even in the conceptions of Christian people, as well as unbelievers, in these days? Many think of the Father as representing justice, and of the Son as representing mercy. They im-

agine the Son as coming between the wrath of the Father and the guilty sinner. It is very much like the story of Pocahontas, the daughter of an Indian chief, who came between the executioner and Captain Smith, when the executioner was standing with his club uplifted, ready to strike the fatal blow on the head of his victim. The notion of a great many people is that God the Father is all wrath, and that we can never look at God or think of God, and that God never can look at us or think of us, except with a kind of mutual abhorrence and antagonism; and that so Jesus Christ incarnates the principle of love, and comes in between the the angry God and the sinner. That is a very shallow notion indeed. Have you never got hold of the idea that the Father is just as much interested in you as the Son is, and that the Father loves you just as much as the Son does? Look at this verse. It puts all the glory of the love and the sacrifice upon the Father: "*God so loved* the world *that He gave* His only begotten Son." He put it thus that you and I may understand that our notion of the Son is our notion of the Father. When Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and it sufficeth us," Jesus answered, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip? he that hath

seen Me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou, then, 'Show us the Father'?"

Do you not understand my thought if you understand my word? And if my word is the right expression of my thought, how absurd it would be for somebody to say, "I understand his word well enough, but I wish that I could understand his thought." My word, being human, may not always properly express my thought; but with God the Word is the perfect expression of the thought; and so if you have understood the word you have understood the thought: and if you have understood the thought you have understood the word. If you have seen the Son, you have seen the Father. If the love of the Son has touched you, the love of the Father has touched you. If you worship the Son, you worship the Father. If you obey the Son, you obey the Father; so that you need not be troubled about your feelings toward the Father, and say, as many a person has said to me, "I wish that I could feel toward God the Father as I feel toward Jesus. I wish that I could have those views of God the Father that I have of Jesus. I wish that I could have the freedom with the Father that I have with the Son."

Now, dismiss all that kind of trouble and per-

plexity from your mind; for as you think of the Son, you think of the Father; as you love the Son, you love the Father; as you pray to the Son, you pray to the Father; and as you obey and serve the Son, you obey and serve the Father. The Son thinks of you just as the Father does, and the Father thinks of you just as the Son does."

"So near, so very near to God,
Nearer I cannot be;
For in the person of His Son
I am as near as He.

So dear, so very dear to God,
Dearer I cannot be;
For the love wherewith He loves the Son
Is the love He bears to me."

The second pair of words is "loved" and "gave." He loved and gave. I have no desire to enter into nice distinctions, but with the simplicity of a little child approach this heart of the gospel. And yet a child will understand that when we use the word "love," we sometimes mean one thing and sometimes another. For instance, suppose that you should try to get some poor criminal out of prison—a miserable, filthy, degraded, defiled man. Somebody asks you why you do it, and you say that you *love* him. Now, that would not be taken to mean the same kind

of love as you bear your mother. Those are very different loves—the love that you bear to your mother and the love that you bear to some vile criminal. The word "love" has a different meaning in different cases. The apostle John says, "We love Him because He first loved us." Was not the love of God to us something different from the love that we bear to Him? I love God because I know Him to be the most beautiful, the most wise, the most glorious, the most fatherly, the most tender, the most pitiful, the most gracious being in the universe. Why did He love me? Because He saw that I was beautiful and truthful, and lovely, and honest, and honorable? Not so, says the apostle. "When we were enemies He loved us, and He commendeth His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." So there are two kinds of love. We call them the love of complacence and the love of benevolence. Complacence means a feeling of pleasure. You love a beautiful person, a lovely character, because you see something in the person and in the character that draws out your love. But that is not the kind of love that we call the love of benevolence, for such love is bestowed on people in whom we do not see anything beautiful or lovely. We love them for the sake of the good we may do them, and for the sake of the beautiful character that, by

grace, we may help to develop in them. So, therefore, the love of complacence is intensive, but the love of benevolence is extensive; the love of complacence is partial, the love of benevolence is impartial; the love of complacence is exclusive and select, the love of benevolence is inclusive and universal. The love of complacence is a kind of selfish love, but the love of benevolence is a generous love. The love of complacence may be an involuntary love: we see the qualities that attract affection, and we love unconsciously and involuntarily; but the love of benevolence is voluntarily exercised. The love of complacence has to do with comparatively few of the people whom we know; the love of benevolence takes in the whole world, and hundreds and thousands of people whom we do not know, and never saw, but whom, for the sake of Jesus, we love.

Have you fixed that in your thought? The kind of love, then, that God had for us was the love of benevolence—extensive, inclusive, impartial, universal, self-denying, self-forgetting, voluntary.

Now, it is the characteristic of *that* kind of love that *it gives.* We call it the love of benevolence, and "benevolence" is another word for "giving"; and such love keeps nothing, but gives everything that it has, and gives to

everybody. Of course, if God loved us after that sort, He had to give. He could not so love if He did not give, any more than the sun could be the sun without shining, or a spring of water could be a spring without flowing out into a stream. And so these words, "loved" and "gave," naturally go together. You could not have the one without the other. There could not be this wonderful giving without this wonderful loving; and there could not be this wonderful loving without this wonderful giving.

Now, let us look at the third pair of words—"world" and "whosoever."

It need not be said that those are both *universal terms.* "World" is the most universal term that we have in the language. For instance, we sometimes mean by it the whole earth on which we dwell; sometimes the whole human family that dwells on the earth; and sometimes the world-age, or whole period during which the whole family of man occupies the sphere. That is the word that God uses to indicate the objects of His love. But there is always danger of our losing sight of ourselves in a multitude of people. In the great mass individuals are lost, and it becomes to us simply a countless throng. But when God looks at us, he never forgets each individual. Every one of you to-night stands out just as plainly before the Lord as though

you were the only man, woman, or child on earth. So God adds here another word, "whosoever," that is also universal, but with this difference between the two: "world" is collectively universal, that is, it takes all men in the mass; "whosoever" is distributively universal, that is, it takes everyone out of the mass, and holds him up separately before the Lord. If this precious text only said, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son," one might say, "Oh, He never thought of me. He had a kind of general love to the whole world, but He never thought of me." But when God uses that all-embracing word "whosoever," that must mean you and me; for whatever my name or yours may be, our name is "whosoever," is it not? John Newton used to say that it was a great deal better for him that this verse had the word "whosoever" in it than the words "John Newton"; "for," he said, "if I read 'God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that when John Newton believed he should have everlasting life,' I should say, perhaps there is some other John Newton; but 'whosoever' means this John Newton and the other John Newton, and everybody else, whatever his name may be." Blessed be the Lord! He would not have us forget that He thought of each one of us, and so He said, "whosoever."

You notice the same thing in the great commission, "Go ye into all the world" (collectively universal) "and preach the gospel to every creature" (distributively universal).

Before I leave this pair of words, let me illustrate what a precious term this word "whosoever" is. It reminds me of the great gates of this Tabernacle, that spring open to let in poor souls that want to hear the gospel. This word "whosoever" is the wide gateway to salvation, and lets in any poor sinner who seeks to find for himself a suffering but reigning Saviour.

In the South Seas, in the beginning of the present century, was a man of the name of Hunt, who had gone to preach the gospel to the inhabitants of Tahiti. The missionaries had labored there for about fourteen or fifteen years, but had not, as yet, a single convert. Desolating wars were then spreading across the island of Tahiti and the neighboring islands. The most awful idolatry, sensuality, ignorance, and brutality, with everything else that was horrible, prevailed; and the Word of God seemed to have made no impression upon those awfully degraded islanders. A translation of the gospel according to John had just been completed, and Mr. Hunt, before it was printed, read from the manuscript translation the third chapter; and,

as he read on, he reached this sixteenth verse, and, in the Tahitian language, gave those poor idolaters this compact little gospel: "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

A chief stepped out from the rest (Pomare II.), and said, "Would you read that again, Mr. Hunt?" Mr. Hunt read it again. "Would you read that once more?" and he read it once more. "Ah!" said the man, "that may be true of you white folks, but it is not true of us down here in these islands. The gods have no such love as that for us." Mr. Hunt stopped in his reading, and he took that one word "whosoever," and by it showed that poor chief that God's gospel message meant *him;* that it could not mean one man or woman any more than another. Mr. Hunt was expounding this wonderful truth, when Pomare II. said, "Well, then, if that is the case, your book shall be my book, and your God shall be my God, and your people shall be my people, and your heaven shall be my home. We, down on the island of Tahiti, never heard of any God that loved us and loved everybody in that way." And that first convert is now the leader of a host, numbering nearly a million, in the South Seas. Reference has already been made to the fact that

this was the great text that Dr. Clough found so blessed among the Telugus. When the great famine came on, in 1877, and the missionaries were trying to distribute relief among the people, Dr. Clough, who was a civil engineer, took a contract to complete the Buckingham Canal, and he got the famishing people to come in gangs of four thousand or five thousand. Then, after the day's work was over, he would tell them the simple story of redemption. He had not yet learned the Telugu language sufficiently to make himself well understood in it, but he had done this: he had committed to memory John iii, 16, in the Telugu tongue. And when, in talking to his people, he got "stuck," he would fall back on John iii, 16. What a blessed thing to be able at least to repeat that! Then he would add other verses, day by day, to his little store of committed texts, until he had a sermon, about half an hour long, composed of a string of texts, like precious pearls. I have sometimes thought that I would rather have heard that than many modern sermons. So, once again, the great text that God used for bringing souls to Christ was still Luther's little gospel: "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Now we come to the fourth pair of words, "believe" and "have." You will see how important these words are. If God so loved that He gave, what is necessary on the part of man? Only this, that he should *take* and *have*. That is very plain. If God loved you and the whole world, and gave you all that He had to give, all that remains for anybody to do is so to appreciate the love of God as to take the gift that God bestows, and so to have the gift that he takes. *Believing is receiving.* John, at the beginning of this gospel, tells us in what sense he is going to use the word "believe." That word occurs forty-four times in the gospel according to John, which is the great gospel of "believing." You do not find the word "repent" in it once, but it is constantly repeating believing, believing, believing, and having life. In the twelfth and thirteenth verses of the first chapter, we read: "To as many as *received* Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that *believe* on His name." "To as many as *received*, even to those that *believed*." That little word "even" indicates that to *believe* is equivalent to *receive*. You may, in any one of those forty-four instances in this gospel, put the word "receive" in the place of the word "believe," and still make good sense. For example: "God so loved the world that He gave

His only begotten Son, that whosoever received Him might have everlasting life."

You *have* what you *take*, do you not? It is a very simple thing to take what is given to you, and so to have it. That is, practically, *all there is in faith.* We may make faith obscure by talking too much about it, leading others to infer that there is in it some obscurity or mystery. Faith is very simple: it is taking the eternal life that is offered to you in Christ. If you can put forth your hand and receive a gift, you are able to put forth your will and receive the gift of God, even Jesus Christ, as your Saviour. I heard of an old lady, who was starting on a railway journey from an American station, out of which many trains move, although in different directions. Not having traveled much on the rail cars, she got confused. The old lady I speak of was going up to Bay City, Michigan, and she was afraid that she was, perhaps, on the wrong train. She reached over, and showed her ticket to somebody in the seat immediately in front of her and said, "I want to go to Bay City. Is this the right train?" "Yes, madam." Still, she was not quite at ease, for she thought that perhaps this fellow-passenger might have got into the wrong train too; so she stepped across the aisle of the car, and showed her ticket to another person, and

was again told, "Yes, madam, this is the right train." But still the old lady was a little uncertain. In a few moments in came the conductor, or, as you call him, the guard; and she saw on his cap the conductor's ribbon, and she beckoned to him, and said, "I want to go to Bay City; is this the right train?" "Yes, madam, this is the right train." And now she settled back in her seat, and was asleep before the train moved. That illustrates the simplicity of taking God at His word. She did nothing but just receive the testimony of that conductor. That is all; but that is faith. The Lord Jesus Christ says to you, "I love you; I died for you. Do you believe? Will you receive the salvation that I bought for you with my own blood?" You need do no work; not even so much as to get up and turn round. You need not go and ask your fellow-man across the church aisle, there, whether he has believed, and received, and been saved. All that you need to do is with all your heart to say, "Dear Lord, I do take this salvation that Thou hast bought for me, and brought to me." Simple, is it not? Yes, very simple; yet such receiving it is the soul of faith.

And what is assurance but consciously *having* what you *take?* Somebody comes and offers me, to-night, some freewill offering! It costs

me nothing. All that I have to do is to take what is given to me, and have it for my own. Faith is the *taking*, and the assurance is the conscious *having;* and that is all that I know about it.

There remains another pair of words. Would to God that I might impress the meaning of those terms, "perish" and "everlasting life"! What does "perish" mean, and what does "life" mean? When the prodigal son went into the far country, and had wasted his substance in riotous living, he came to himself; and he came back to his father, and he said, "Father, I have sinned." And the father said, "This my son was dead, and is alive again. He was lost, and is found." A son that is lost to his father is dead to his father, and a son that is found by his father is alive to his father. God said to Adam, "In the day that thou eatest of the forbidden fruit, thou shalt surely die." It did not mean that Adam should that day die, physically. It meant something worse than that. He *died to God* when he ate. One proof that he died to God when he ate that forbidden fruit is that, when the Lord God came down to walk in the garden as the companion of Adam in the cool of the day, our first parents shrank from the presence of the Lord, and hid behind the trees of the garden, when they heard His footsteps

and the sound of His voice. They were dead to sympathy toward God, dead to love toward God, dead to pleasure in God; and so they tried to get out of the way of God—as if it were possible to put a veil between them and Him. How do you know you are dead to God? You want to get out of his way. You do not love the things that God loves; you would like to be independent of God's rule. You would like, if possible, to get into some corner of the universe where there is no God. You are like the men in America who went across to California, when the golden gates of that country were first opened, that they might enrich themselves. They tried to do without God, and there was a horrible state of sensuality and criminality there; and though there were, nominally, Christian families, and even Christian churches, these gold seekers had left God on the other side of the Rocky Mountains, if not still further off, on the other side of the Alleghenies. They sought to get where there was no sanctuary, Bible, or family altar, and no restraint of Christian government, or recognition of a God above. The Psalmist twice says, "The fool hath said in his heart, *there is* no God;" and if you leave out the italicized words, which are not in the original, it reads like this: "The fool hath said in his heart—No God!" That is, "I wish that there

were no God." The impious man hates God. It is an uncomfortable thing for him to think that there is a Sovereign of all the earth, who will judge all the works done in the body. It is uncomfortable to think that beyond the grave there lie the great assizes of the judgment day, and that one is unprepared to go into that judgment, and meet the Judge. And so people try to make up their minds that there is no hereafter or judgment, and that there is no God. It is a sign that you are "dead" when you would like that there should be no God, and you do not want God to have any rule over you. And what is the sign that you are alive? You come to yourself, and then you come to the Father? You would not have God out of the universe if, by a stroke of the hand, you could annihilate Him. You would not have the judgment-seat out of the universe, for that is the place where all wrongs are righted. You would not have heaven blotted out, for that is where

> "The quenched lamps of hope are all re-lighted,
> And the golden links of love are re-united;"

and where there shall be no more sin, nor sorrow, nor sighing, nor tears; and where every shadow shall flee away. Paul says that the "woman who lives in pleasure is dead while she liveth." That is to say that, while she exists,

she is so wrapped up in fashion, in ornaments, in the plaiting of the hair, and the putting on of gold and of gorgeous apparel—living for this world and her own indulgence, that she is dead to the things that are alone worth living for, and that take hold of the invisible, divine, and eternal.

Now, let us once more hear the word of the living God. God so loved you that He gave the best that He had to give, and all that He had to give; and while He gave to the whole world, He singled you out as the object of His love, and said, "whosoever"—"every creature." And now that that gift is given to you, and there is no more to be given, God can do no more. He does not ask you to pay the one-thousandth part of a farthing for the priceless values represented in the Son of God. All that God can do now is to say to you that the very fact that you reject His dear Son is a proof that you are spiritually dead. Even though you dispute the fact, you are dead; as a deaf man may not understand how deaf he is, and a blind man may not understand the glories of sight, so a dead man cannot understand the energies of the living. And so the very fact that you think that you are not dead is another proof that you are. You have no sensibility even to the fact that you are

spiritually without life. God comes and says, "Come back to Me, my prodigal and wandering son. You shall have the robe; you shall have the ring; you shall have the shoes. I will give them all to you with the absoluteness of an infinite love, and you shall take them, and have them because you take them." Just the moment that you turn toward God, and say, "My Father, I take the robe and the ring, and the shoes, and the place of a restored son in the Father's house," you will live again; for you recognize your Father, and yourself as His son. You recognize His right to command, and your duty to obey. You recognize that the only place for a son is the home and the heart of his father. That is the proof that you are once more alive.

"Tell me how long it would take to change from death unto life?" Just as long, and no longer, as it takes you to turn round. Your back has been on God. You turn, and your face is toward Him. It will take no longer for a sinner to become a living son of God than that. Just put your heart into your acceptance of Jesus. Cast your whole will into the acceptance of the Fatherhood of God, renounce your sin and your rebellion, and take the salvation that is given to you as freely as the sun gives

its light, or the spring gives its stream ; and before you turn round to go out of that church door, you may have this salvation, and perhaps enjoy in yourself the consciousness that you are saved !

"SIN COMPELS SEPARATION."

III.

"SIN COMPELS SEPARATION."

"Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."
—LUKE v, 8.

HERE is a very remarkable confession, and a very remarkable prayer. The confession is, "I am a sinful man, O Lord." The prayer is, "Depart from me." The confession would not be so very remarkable in itself, if it were not evidently the expression of a deep sense of sin. That is very rare in these days. It is told of Nelson, at Trafalgar, that, when he received his death wound, he sent for the chaplain, and he said, "Chaplain, they tell me that I have got to die; but really, I do not know that I have been a very great sinner." And while there are many people in this world who are ready to confess that they are sinners, the confession is sometimes nothing more than a kind of veil to hide their self-righteousness. They do not mean it. They have no sense of sin. One morning in the year 1878, while I was sitting in my study in Detroit, in Michigan, just after

my breakfast, I heard a knock at the door, and I said, "Come in," and a man about thirty years of age opened the door. I saw that he had been violently weeping, and he said, "May I come in, sir?" I said, "Yes, indeed you may. Can I do anything for you?" "Well, sir," said he, "I do not know, but I am a great sinner, and I want a Saviour." Said I, "Come right in, my friend. You are just the man that I have been looking for, for about ten years"—a man, deeply afflicted with a sense of his sin, and deeply desirous of finding a Saviour from his sin. That is the man I wanted to see then, and that is the man I want to see now; and if there were enough of such to take up the time till to-morrow morning, who would not gladly stay here and talk with such, and point them to Jesus? How many pastors there are all through Great Britain, as in America, who are thus yearning to find some souls oppressed with a sense of guilt, and desirous to find a salvation from sin.

Simon Peter, on this occasion if never before, had a deep sense of his own sin, and so that confession was wrung out of him—"I am a sinful man, O Lord"; and it was accompanied by an involuntary prayer, "Depart from me," for he felt that, as a sinner, he was unfit to associate with such a Saviour.

Why is it that there are so few people in these days that seem to have any deep sense of sin? I am speaking, now, of the unsaved—those that are not disciples of Jesus Christ.

Because, in the first place, there is very little *right thinking about sin* itself. If you ask a man whether he is a sinner, he understands you to mean by that a great, a flagrant, an outbreaking transgressor. If you tell him that he is a great sinner in the sight of God, he thinks perhaps that you mean to accuse him of being a blasphemer, a perjurer, a thief, an adulterer, a murderer. Without any of these outbreaking forms of sin, there may be a deep and damning hatred of God in the human soul. There are many diseases that have no corresponding outward symptom. A man fell through a hatchway and was taken up dead, and there was not an outward sign on his body, that one could perceive, of the fatal injury. It was the shock that killed him, and yet there was no appearance of his having come to his death by any such violence. It is said that in the great plague that devastated London a long time ago, if there appeared in the cheek just one little round red spot it was the sign of death, and death came very rapidly. That single symptom was the sign of approaching dissolution. Sin may not break out in violent trampling on the ten

commandments; but Almighty God, looking with omniscient eye beneath the veil of outward propriety, and even morality, sees lurking in souls the desperate and deadly hatred of Himself.

Then again, there is a large bulk of sins, which some of us never even think of, and which may be called *sins of omission*, that is, things that are left undone; for sin includes not merely what is done contrary to the will of God, but what we fail to do which is in accordance with His blessed will—laws unkept, commands disregarded, paths of duty never walked in. What about all that class of sins included under those sins of omission?

Did you ever notice this fact—that three of the greatest arraignments in the whole word of God on the subject of sin have to do with what is *not done?* For instance, when Jesus Christ, in the sixteenth chapter of John, speaks of the coming of the Holy Spirit and of His work in the sinner's soul, He says, "He shall convince of sin because they believe not on Me." *Not believing.* In the great vision of judgment in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew, when the King sits on the throne of His glory, those that go away into everlasting punishment are addressed by Him in these words, "I was hungry, and ye gave Me no meat; a stranger, and ye

took Me not in ; naked, and ye clothed Me not ; sick and in prison, and ye visited Me not. Inasmuch as ye *did it not* unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it not to Me." *Not doing:* not something done, but something not done. And, when Paul writes to the Corinthians, as he comes to the end of his epistle, he crowds aside the amanuensis, and he takes up the pen in his own hands, and in large characters he writes, "The salutation of me, Paul, with mine own hand. If any man *love not* the Lord Jesus Christ let him be anathema." Not "If any man hate"; not "If any man persecute"; not "If any man blaspheme the Lord Jesus Christ"; but "If any man *love not* the Lord Jesus Christ." Believing not, doing not, loving not—these are the three arraignments of God upon which is based the punishment of the sinner, even his everlasting exclusion from the presence, glory, and power of the Lord.

Again, we have not a *right perception* of sin. We are like people born blind that have not the proper sense of sight, or like people born deaf that have not the proper sense of hearing, or like people born without proper feeling or sensibility, so that they do not perceive as men perceive that have proper eyes, and proper ears, and proper organs. And what is more than that, we become more and more callous about

sin *by familiarity* with it. Workmen know that if they continue to use an instrument or an implement or a tool of trade in one hand habitually, that hand becomes callous, hardened by its use, so that the tenderness of the palm is injured. And so you may injure the sensitive surface of your conscience.

> "Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,
> As to be hated needs but to be seen;
> Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,
> We first endure, then pity, then embrace."

Our conscience is like an alarm clock, which rings out its alarm early in the morning, and if you go to sleep again and disregard it, the next morning when it rings you hear it less plainly; and the next morning it still less effectively disturbs your sleep, until, by and by, you can sleep through the noise and never hear it. Disregard the voice of conscience, and to-morrow it will speak more feebly, less clearly. Disregard it still, and the next time it will be a little more faint, a little less clear, until, by and by, you can go on in the sleep of sin and scarcely ever hear its remonstrance. And so you learn not to perceive the sin that you are committing, by becoming accustomed to it. It ceases to affect your sensibilities.

Then again, there is a *power in sin to deceive*

a man. Remember what the Word of God itself says, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." Yes, the heart makes the theology. Why do men like to believe that they are not sinners? Because it makes them uncomfortable to think that they are. A man, perhaps, has about him some fatal disease, and he wants, if possible, to persuade himself that the difficulty is not so serious, and all the urgency and importunity of a friendly physician, advising him to take care of the disease while it is possible, perhaps to alleviate its symptoms or lengthen his life, does not affect him. He tries to make himself believe that, after all, his case is not a dangerous one. That is the way in which men deal with the subject of sin. They have not a right conception of sin, they have not a clear perception of sin, and sin is itself a cherished deception. Just as an insane man persuades himself that he is sane, and thinks that he is sound in mind, and that everybody around him is crazy; so a sinner disputes his own sin, and it is part of the madness that is in the hearts of the sons of men while they live, that they persuade themselves that they are not sinners, even against the verdict of God.

How can we get free from this wrong conception, lack of perception, and snare of deception

with regard to sin and its nature? How can we come to know that we are sinners, and to see ourselves somewhat as God sees us?

In the first place, we must *receive God's verdict* concerning us. Here is a blind man: he is approaching the edge of a precipice, but he does not see the precipice, and so far perhaps he is not responsible if he falls off, inasmuch as he does not perceive his danger. But suppose that I, who do see his danger, come up, and put my hand on his shoulder, and say, "My friend, ten feet in front of you there is a precipice, and if you keep on walking in the direction in which you are now going, you will go over, and be dashed into pieces." If after that warning he does so, he does it at his own responsibility. It is a case of suicide, for, though he did not see the danger, I did, and I warned him. Now, perhaps you do not see your sin, but God tells you what He thinks of it, and all that you have to do is to take God's verdict concerning yourself. Let the eyes of God become eyes to you to see yourself, and let the ears of God become ears to you to hear your danger, and let the sensibilities of God become sensibilities to you to perceive the guilt and peril in which you are, and then you will come to know yourself somewhat as God knows you.

If you will take the Bible testimony you will

see what God thinks of men. It is a fearfully solemn thing to get God's verdict. In the days of Noah the Lord said, "every imagination of the thought of man's heart is only evil continually, and the whole earth is corrupt before me and filled with violence." In the days of Solomon God looked down from heaven upon the children of men to see if there were any that did understand and seek after God, and He said, "They are altogether become filthy; they are all gone out of the way. There is not one that doeth good; no, not one." And in the days of the apostle Paul, when Paul wrote the third chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, what does he say? "There is none righteous; no, not one. There is none that feareth and seeketh after God. The poison of asps is under their lips; their mouth is full of bitterness; their feet make haste to shed innocent blood. Destruction and misery are in their ways, and the way of peace they have not known, and there is no fear of God before their eyes." And when Paul frames this terrible arraignment of the natural and unsaved man, he draws threads for the woof and the warp from the most terrible statements of the entire Old Testament. He selects out of the whole Word of God, as then possessed, these awful expressions of the natural man and the unsaved man, and he weaves them to-

gether and says, "that is God's opinion of men."

Once more, in order to come to the sense of my sin, it is necessary that I should set up alongside of myself *God's perfect standard* of truth and life, and duty and conduct. One of the common things that men do—and it is a piece of folly and of wickedness—is to compare themselves among themselves, and measure themselves by themselves. Suppose that a carpenter should desire to plane the edge of a board straight. Would he put alongside of that board another crooked board to guide his plane by? If so, he would simply perpetuate imperfection. No, he puts a straight-edge alongside of his board, and marks it accordingly, and so he planes it straight. If a mason, building a wall, "sights" the wall that he is building by another wall that, perhaps, leans from the perpendicular or inclines from the horizontal, he will construct his own wall inclining and leaning. In all the arts—the mechanical arts and the fine arts—we have to employ, as near as possible, a perfect standard. We use the plane, the square, the level, the plumb-line, and by these approximations to perfection we are enabled to bring our work itself into an approximation to perfection. If a man takes a standard that is far below perfection he

will only make more imperfect work, like the standard that he follows.

God has given us, in his precious Word, a perfect standard of doctrine and of deportment, in the Lord Jesus Christ; and, if ever you are tempted to think that you are not a sinner, set up your character and your conduct beside that of Jesus, and see how far you come short of the standard of perfection; and then you may be able to see why it is that God counts you to be even a great sinner. If you drop a clean white piece of linen on the freshly fallen snow, the linen looks unclean, because there is nothing so white in the universe as the fresh snows from heaven. If you put an oil lamp in front of an electric light, that which was before casting light now casts only a shadow, for the flame of the oil light becomes only an obstacle to the shining of the brighter electric flame. And if the fairest human life be put in the burning focus of the light of the life of Jesus Christ, that fair life will appear but as a shadow in comparison with the intenser luster of the radiant God-Man.

This train of thought is the natural introduction to the true understanding of the text. Why was it that Peter came to be so oppressed with a sense of sin, when Christ had performed

this miracle? He had toiled all night in the Lake of Galilee, and had taken no fish. Jesus said, "Let down your nets for a draught"; and so great was now the draught of fishes that the nets began to break, and Simon Peter and his companions had to beckon to their partners in the other ship, James and John, to come and help them to draw the fish to the land.

There was nothing in this miracle that was calculated to call Peter's attention to the moral attributes of Jesus. There was nothing in it to suggest holiness. It might suggest omniscience, that Jesus Christ saw the fish gathered in that place. It might suggest omnipotence, that He gathered the fish into that place. But it did not suggest moral attributes. But, when Peter thought of omnipotence or omniscience, he thought of God, and so he thought of holiness; for, in connection with the Divine Being, the Jew thought of holiness first of all, and the whole ritual of the old economy and all the prohibitions about the tabernacle were intended to impress the idea of God's purity—that he was of purer eyes than to behold evil, and could not look upon sin. And so when Peter was reminded of the power or knowledge of this Being who was beside him—for it was evidently the power or knowledge of God—he thought of the moral character of God, and

especially the divine holiness, and so he thought of his own sin in comparison ; and this drew from him the confession, "I am a sinful man, O Lord," and it wrung from him the prayer, "Depart from me."

And now, naturally, the thought is suggested that conscious sin brings conscious sense of separation. If, by any means, the conviction of sin be produced in a human soul, the immediate effect is that there is the consciousness of ill-desert : "I deserve to be separated from all holy beings." It is impossible to have the sense of sin awakened in you without there coming at once into your mind the thought, "I am unfit to be associated with those who are holy, and especially with a holy God"; and so, just as surely as you come to the conclusion that you are a sinner, just so surely will you come to the conclusion that you ought to depart from God, or that God ought to depart from you. This is a very solemn thought, and it is a key to many great mysteries.

An illustration may be drawn from old Greek fables which may be very helpful in understanding this subject. There was a strange being called the Lamia. It was said that by nature it was a serpent, but had power to assume the beautiful form of a seductive woman, and then walked through the groves

and avenues to seduce unwary youths to follow her, that she might eat them or suck their blood. The Greeks held a philosopher to be the representative of all that was most beautiful and pure in character; and the old story says that one of these Lamiæ that had taken a beautiful female form suddenly confronted the eyes of one of Greece's purest philosophers. He stood with folded arms, and looked at her with intent and fixed gaze—looked at her as though he read through her deceptive form the secrets of her being; and beneath his pure glance she began to tremble and cringe and shrink away, until she turned into the loathsome reptile that she was, and drew her length along the ground in slime. And so is iniquity stripped of all its disguises before the eye of infinite purity. When God looks upon man, man forgets his self-righteous plea; he forgets the morality in which he has been confident; he forgets the outward propriety in which he has taken refuge; and, giving up all these disguises, he sees himself in God's sight to be a child of the devil, and shrinks away before the face of God.

Through the Old Testament and the New you will find one continuous and unchanging testimony on this subject. When, in Eden, Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, and God

came down to walk and talk with them in the garden in the cool of the day, as was His custom, to hold fellowship with His human children, they hid behind the trees of the garden, afraid to look upon God. The very presence of God flashed remonstrance in their faces, and made it impossible for them to hold communion with the Holy One. When Moses stood before the burning bush that burned and was not consumed, he turned aside, for we are told that he was afraid to look upon God. When the bright and Holy One appeared to Daniel, as we read in the 10th chapter of his prophecy, and Daniel looked on those eyes that flashed fire, and on those feet that were as burnished brass, and heard that voice as the sound of many waters, he tells us, "Then my comeliness was turned into corruption, and there remained no strength in me." Daniel stood as high above the men of Babylon as the image on the plain of Dura rose above the plain, and yet, when he looked upon the holiness of God, even the things on which he had prided himself,—his beauty of person or beauty of conduct, the very propriety of demeanor or excellence of character, his very comeliness was turned into corruption, and he retained no more strength.

And when even the beloved disciple who leaned on the breast of Jesus at supper beheld,

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as we read in the Book of Revelation, the same vision of the Holy One, he fell at His feet as dead. Ah! you and I can never stand the vision of the holy God till we become partners of the Divine nature in Jesus. Then, like the eagle, we can soar up into the heaven, and, with undimmed eye, look at the Sun of Righteousness in the splendor of His noontide glory.

Let me add a few words of practical application.

We have here a key that unlocks many of the mysteries of the future state. The world is full of people who dispute the great Bible doctrine which, I praise God, has never been denied or disputed in this place—the punishment of the finally ungodly and the impenitent with "everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of His power." There is every method taken to get rid of this unpleasant doctrine. Some boldly deny it. Others try to inculcate a doctrine of restoration—some method of universal salvation, some atonement for sin in a kind of purgatory, with deliverance from purgatorial pains and hell fires after the period of purgation has passed by. But I pray you consider, just for a moment, whether there be not in the human soul a revelation that goes side by side with the revelation in the Word of God. Are there not materials in the human soul

which, out of themselves, could build a hell if there were no hell revealed? The brothers of Joseph stood before him in the palace of the Pharaoh, and as yet Joseph had not revealed himself to them, and they did not know that it was Joseph. No voice spoke to them from above. God did not accuse them. No man arraigned them for guilt in selling their brother into Egypt. But observe this: "They said among themselves, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul when he besought us, and we would not hear. Therefore is this distress come upon us."

What were the elements of this self-accusation? First, *memory:* "We saw the anguish of his soul," twenty years ago, when he was put in that pit, and "he besought us, and we would not hear." He asked to be taken back to his father and his father's home, and not to have that awful fraud, of the coat dipped in the blood of a kid, imposed on his father in his old age. "We saw the anguish of his soul when he besought us, and we would not hear." Then, in the second place, there was *conscience:* "We are verily guilty concerning our brother." And then, *reason:* "Therefore is this distress come upon us." If you should go into the next world with your memory and your conscience and your reason uncleansed by the power of the blood of

Christ, those three elements, that you possess in your own constitution, would build a hell for you in any part of the universe of God. I want you to feel the greatness and the awfulness of this truth. It can give a preacher no pleasure to declare such awful truths. But Jesus Christ came into this world to save sinners, and not to save anybody else but sinners; and, if you do not feel that you are a sinner, He has no mission to save you. And I am especially desirous, at the outset of this temporary ministry, that I shall have the help of God to produce a conviction of sin in souls that have never been convinced of sin; for if you find truly convicted sinners, you will shortly find also conscious saints. There are the elements of self-condemnation in any man who has got a memory and a conscience and a reason. There is a law of affinity in accordance with which every man, when he goes out of this world, goes to his own place, just as Judas did.

Yes, Judas went to his own place. Notice that, first, every man has his own place in this world and in the next.

Second, every man makes his own place in this world and in the next.

Third, every man finds his own place in this world and in the next.

Fourth, every man feels that it is his own place when he gets there.

Suppose that I take filings of various metals and sprinkle them in front of me, and I pass through them a magnet. The magnet takes up all the filings of iron and steel, and rejects the brass, and even the silver and the gold. Why? Because there is a magnetic affinity between the magnet and the steel and iron. Suppose I take various substances, and put them in a vial together and shake them up violently, and then set the vial down. If there are substances in that vial that are alike and have affinity for each other, they will combine, but otherwise they will refuse to combine, just as oil and water do. That is chemical affinity. And just as there is magnetic and chemical affinity, so there is moral and spiritual affinity among souls. Every man goes to his own place—the place to which, by his own sin or his own regenerate character, he belongs. And there is only one place that you can go to, and that is where you by affinity belong. When you are let go by death you go to your own company. There was a holy man in New England in America, who, being asked, when he was dying, "Are you going to heaven?" looked up and said, "Where else could I go?" It was not pride, it was not vain-glory, it was

not self-confidence, but it was the knowledge that Jesus was his Saviour, and his whole soul longed after Jesus, and he knew that, when the bars of his cage were broken, he would mount, like a freed bird, to see the face of his Lord and make his rest in his presence.

"Rivers to the ocean run,
Nor stay in all their course,
Fire ascending seeks the sun,
Both speed them to their source,

"So a soul that's born of God
Pants to view His glorious face,
Upward tends to His abode,
To rest in His embrace."

If you love God, if you believe in Christ, if you are a partaker of the Divine nature, all the demons in hell could not stand between you and the throne of God when you are released from this mortal body. And if you have not sympathy with God, and do not love Him, and hate His rule, and have yet an unpardoned sinful nature, all the angels of God could not escort you to His throne. You would go the other way, by the force of your own inherent gravitation, toward Satan and toward sin.

Now, once more. As I have tried to show you that self-condemnation makes it impossible that you should dwell with God if you are not

like Him, and that your affinities make it impossible that you should seek the society of God if you do not sympathize with His nature, so let me add that the glory of God would turn heaven into hell if you had not the nature of a child of God. Did you ever read that tale in old Roman history about Regulus, the Roman senator, being taken captive by the Carthaginians in one of the Punic wars? Carthage sent him to Rome with humiliating terms of peace, and he agreed that if he did not effect the peace with the Romans, he would go back and put himself under the control of the Carthaginians, and submit to their punishment. Well, when that noble senator rose before the senators of Rome and presented the terms of peace, he advised them to reject the same. He said, "I would not have my country humiliated even for the sake of her peace or of my own safety. I will go back and submit myself to Carthage, but let not Rome submit to peace on these conditions." He went back, and what did the Carthaginians do with him? They inflicted on him the most awful torture that was known in ancient times. They cut off his eyelids; they bound him with his back to the earth and his face to the heavens; and from the time that the sun rose in the morning till the time that the god of day sank behind the hills in the evening,

those eyes had to bear the unclouded blaze of sunshine, until the very powers of vision were paralyzed and the eyes were hopelessly blinded. You sometimes talk of going to heaven when as yet you are unsaved, having never been washed in the blood of Jesus Christ, and baptized into His spirit. In the case of Regulus the elements of this awful torture were just these—*an open eye* and *a pure glory!* What if the torture of the lost should consist in simply being compelled to face the glory of the infinitely holy God, without any likeness to Him or sympathy with His nature!

I beseech you, do not deceive yourselves. There are just two places where you can find out that you are a sinner. One is at the throne of grace on earth: the other is at the throne of glory in the hereafter. If you go into your secret place and shut the door; if you bow down on your knees before the face of almighty God, and say, like the little Highland maid, "O Lord, show me myself," he will open the eyes of your understanding, and he will show what a sinner you are. In the first revelation of your own unfitness to dwell with Him you may, like Peter, be tempted to cry out, "O Lord, I am a sinful man. Depart from me." But the Lord, like Joseph when he drew toward his conscience-smitten brethren, and said,

"Come near to me, I pray you," will throw his arms of mercy and love about you, and will say to you, "I will not depart from thee; neither shalt thou depart from me," for it was to save just such penitent sinners as thou art that Jesus died and rose again.

But if you hide from yourself the fact of your sin and guilt, and try to persuade yourself that you are safe while you are unsaved; if you first learn, at the great white throne of glory above, what a sinner you are, you will then and there be speechless, and the King on the throne shall say, "Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity."

THE MYSTERY OF GODLINESS

IV.

THE MYSTERY OF GODLINESS.

"But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."—1 Timothy iii, 15, 16.

THE punctuation of our English Bible is not assured by divine inspiration, inasmuch as there are no punctuation points, properly so-called, in the original Scriptures. The punctuation is the device of the translators in the hope to make plainer to the ordinary reader what is the meaning. These two verses present us an example of disputed punctuation. Bengel, the author of the Gnomon of the New Testament, remarks that not until the sixteenth century were the words, "pillar and ground of the truth," ever referred to the Church of God, but

always to the doctrine which follows; and it seems that the better punctuation of these two verses concludes the fifteenth verse with the words, "living God." "These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly, but if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God." And then a new sentence should begin: "The pillar and ground of the truth, and, without controversy, great, is the mystery of godliness." This would refer the words "pillar and ground of the truth" to the great doctrine which follows, which embraces the whole system of "piety" or gospel truth which centers in the incarnation of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ.

There is much reason to believe, likewise, that this is a portion of an original Apostles' Creed, older by far than the oldest confession of faith known to the Church of Christ. In those early days of the apostolic Church, when they had, as yet, no written Scriptures of the New Testament, and no formulæ or confessions of faith, it was very desirable, if not necessary, that there should be brief expressions of great Christian doctrine, or fact, which could be so arranged as to be readily committed to memory, and which were doubtless recited either as hymns or as confessions among early disciples. There are seven

cases in the New Testament in which these fragments of some original confession seem to be found, and they are generally introduced by some such expression as "This is a faithful saying"; that is, "This is a saying which is full of the faith, or expresses the faith." And if you will examine into those seven cases, you will find, in every instance, some great, some central truth of redemption, set before us. For example, in the ninth verse of the fourth chapter, we have one of these faithful sayings which the apostle declares to be "worthy of all acceptation," namely, that "godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of the life that is to come. For therefore we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, especially of those that believe."

The conviction that this text is a fragment of some original confession of faith is confirmed by the poetic form in which it appears. The ancient Hebrews used very largely what we call parallelism, a rhythm and a rhyme of thought rather than a rhythm and a rhyme of words; as, for instance, in the Book of the Proverbs: "A wise son maketh a glad father, but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother," where it is the sentiment in the two clauses that corresponds, rather than mere rhyme or rhythm or meter;

and so here you have this same poetic construction. And you will observe that there are three here, each consisting, of course, of two members :

> "God was made manifest in the flesh ;
> Justified in the spirit."
>
> "Seen of angels ;
> Preached among the nations."
>
> "Believed on in the world ;
> Received up into glory."

There is a concession of the fact that this is a mystery, without controversy great. We may as well concede the mystery where even the Holy Ghost does not dispute it. It is said, sometimes, that the Bible is full of mysteries, and men make an excuse for not receiving the truths of the Word of God because they are mysterious ; but one of the marks that the Bible is the Word of God is found in the presence of these same mysteries. "What man knoweth the things of man save the spirit of man which is in him ? Even so the things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God," says Paul, in the second chapter of first Corinthians. And what is the idea ? The ability perfectly to understand the work or workmanship of any man implies in me or in you an equality with that man. Here is a watch, a very dainty and delicate and

intricate machine or piece of mechanism. Now, if you can understand every part of that watch, why every jewel is in its place, why certain materials are used in it, and why everything is in the form and in the place which it occupies—if every detail of the construction of that watch is understood by you, then, if you had the time, and the implements, and the materials, you could make another watch like unto it. The ability to absolutely understand God, implies an equality with God. Because He is as far above us as the heaven is higher than the earth, therefore are His thoughts far beyond the reach of our thoughts, and we can no more take God into our comprehension, than the very smallest flower-cup, that a drop of dew fills, could take in the vastness of the ocean. One of the seals of God upon His word is inscrutable mystery. It is true that the mystery never concerns questions of duty, but always concerns questions of a speculative rather than a practical character. There are secret things that belong unto the Lord our God, but all the things of His law belong to the revealed things that are for the practical guidance of ourselves and our children. And because there never was another being, and never will be another being, like the God-Man, who was not simply God in man, or man in God, but a unique person, the God-Man, two natures

in one person—because we have never had before, and shall never have again, another being like him, and so cannot become familiar with, and by familiar contact accustomed to, the fact of such a person—he must always remain an inscrutable mystery. Let us concede it, and confess it, and abandon all idea that we shall, by our philosophy, ever fathom the depth of it.

Then, again, besides the obvious mystery of the incarnation, it is here declared to be the pillar and prop of the truth. The first word indicates that it is *central*, and the other word indicates that it is *vital*. If you took away the pillars of this house these galleries would fall immediately upon the floor below. When Samson put his arms about the pillars of Dagon's temple, and withdrew them from their standing place, the whole building came down upon the heads of the worshipers. This great doctrine, embodied in this confession, is both central in the system of doctrine and vital to the doctrine itself. Just as soon as man begins to doubt that Jesus Christ was God manifest in the flesh, look out for his creed. His whole system of theology is doomed to tumble down and bury him beneath its ruins. He begins by this departure from truth, but all other departures from truth will logically follow ; for if you take away the central and vital pillar and prop of the whole re-

demptive scheme, you have no longer the doctrine that is according to godliness.

This, which is thus a mysterious doctrine and a central doctrine, is also a very comprehensive doctrine. Suppose that we examine these three couplets:

> "God was made manifest in the flesh:
> Justified in the Spirit.
>
> "Seen of angels:
> Preached among the Gentiles.
>
> "Believed on in the world:
> Received up into glory."

This statement of this great doctrine covers everything from Christ's birth in the inn, at Bethlehem, to his ascension and assumption of the throne of the universe at the right hand of the Father. There is nothing that concerns his career, from the manger to the throne, from birth to resurrection and ascension glory, that is not involved in this brief confession of faith.

This somewhat lengthy introduction is needful to clear the way for the application of this theme. And to make it so simple and easy of apprehension that even a child may be able to get at the vital truth of it, allow me to say that these three couplets may serve to answer three practical questions: First, *Who was he?* second, *Why was he?* and third, *Where is he?*

I. First, Who was he? It is declared, in the first of these couplets, that he was :

> "God manifest in the flesh,
> Justified in the Spirit."

Here our attention is called to the fact that he was man on the one side, and God on the other—God in man, man in God, the God-Man.

His humanity was the more manifest thing, though "God was manifest in the flesh." We use the word "manifest" oftentimes of that which is very clear, very obvious, and very unmistakable; but not in that sense are we to understand the word "manifest" in this text. The fact is that Jesus Christ was *veiled* in the flesh rather than revealed in the flesh. The flesh was the form which God took for manifestation; but the flesh actually became an obscuring medium. It was his humanity that impressed men, and not his divinity. Even his disciples, who walked with him closely for three years, seem to have had doubts of his divinity to the very last, because that which impressed them most, and which was most apparent, was his humanity, and not the divine that dwelt in him. As Van Oosterzee finely says, Jesus Christ came in the garments of our humanity, and it was only now and then, when this robe of his humanity was swept aside, as the mantle of

some general-in-chief is sometimes swept aside when he is reviewing the troops of a great army, that you might at times discover the imperial star of universal royalty shining and glittering upon his breast. Jesus Christ lived among men as a man. He seemed to be a man, though the greatest and grandest of men ; and, because his humanity was manifest rather than his divinity, it became necessary that he should be justified in the Spirit ; that is to say, that by the Holy Ghost dwelling within him and working through him, it should be manifest that he was more than man—that he was God.

How was he justified in the spirit?

In the first place, long before he came on earth, the Spirit justified him in advance as the Son of God and the Messiah of men, by the wonderful utterances of prophecy. Three hundred and thirty-three distinct predictions about our Lord and Saviour are found between Genesis and Malachi, entering into the minutest details of prediction ; telling when he should be born and where he should be born, and under what circumstances, and outlining all the great facts of his life, death, resurrection, and ascension. And the whole canon of the Old Testament Scriptures closed four hundred years before Christ appeared on earth, and the collected body of Old Testament Scriptures was in the hands

of the Jews at least two hundred years before Christ was born.

This prophetic argument is a mighty argument, both for the divinity of Christ and for the inspiration of the Word of God. We may compare the Holy Ghost and prophets of old to a body of artists completing a picture. At first, in the third chapter of Genesis, is a simple outline, on a broad scale, without coloring, of him who, as the seed of the woman, was to bruise the serpent's head. Then came the fuller prophecies of the period of Moses and the period of David, and the period of the prophets, the earlier and the later; and each prophet, as he comes to the great canvas on which the Holy Ghost had outlined the person and work of Jesus Christ, adds a new feature—here and there a touch of drawing, or a touch of color, until, when Malachi lays down his pen, there stands a complete and majestic portrait of the coming Messiah, like the perfect picture of some great hero of the future. And then, when the Evangelists take up their pens to write the simple story of Christ's life and death and resurrection and ascension, you find that the picture from the Evangelists exactly corresponds to the picture from the prophets. The portrait of the future Messiah, made by the prophets under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is the picture of the Messiah who

has already come, as furnished by the Evangelists in the New Testament. Nay, you may take the prophetic portrait, and put it over the portrait by the Evangelists, and find that the lines of the features exactly correspond throughout. That is the way that, in advance, the Spirit justified the coming Messiah as one that was to be the Son of God, the mighty worker, the everlasting Lord.

Then, when Christ came, the Spirit justified Him by works such as man never wrought, and words such as man never spoke. A great deal has been said in these days about the miracles of Jesus Christ. Often we forget that these were not simply miracles of wisdom, or miracles of power; but they were, above all, miracles of love, miracles of benevolence, unselfish ministry to the wants of men; and how blind, therefore, and how hard, must have been the whole nature of those who said, "He worketh miracles and casteth out devils through Beelzebub, the prince of the devils." Even though Satan might have had the mightiest power among men, can you imagine him using that power in works of mercy and love, and healing and recovery? There were never such words of wisdom as Jesus spoke; and there were never such works of mercy and love, as well as power and wisdom, as He wrought.

And so the Holy Ghost testified to Him during His life.

And then came the greatest of all the Spirit's testimonies ; for Paul says, in the fourth verse of the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, that He was "declared to be the Son of God with power"—that is, with especial power—"by the resurrection from the dead." Where all men cease to exercise activity and influence, there the ministry of Jesus Christ practically began the period of its greatest power. Men go into the grave, and we put up by their sepulchers in our cemeteries the broken pillar, the quenched fire, and the plucked flower, as the symbols to express the idea that life has been broken off, and light has been put out, and hope has been blasted. But when you come to the sepulcher of Jesus Christ, there the pillar receives its crown and its capital ; there the fire just begins to burn in its celestial glory ; there the flower bursts into the fullness of its bloom. The Holy Ghost declared the Son of God to be the Son of God, with power, when He raised Him from the dead, so that He broke the bonds of death, and burst the bars of the tomb, and when, on the third day, He came forth in open triumph over death and "him that hath the power of death, that is the devil."

And we must make more of the resurrection

of Jesus Christ. Paul says, in the fifteenth chapter of I Corinthians, "If Christ be not risen, your faith is vain and our preaching vain, and ye are yet in your sins." We sometimes say that Jesus Christ, by His death, delivers us from the wrath to come. I am not sure that that is an exact and full statement. We are told in the Epistle to the Romans that He was delivered over for our offenses, but raised again for our justification. If He had not been raised, the penalty of death would still have been upon Him as upon a transgressor of the law. There would have been no sign that His mediation for man was accepted by the Father; but when He rose from the dead, and came forth from His prison in the grave, as man's substitute, accepted by God and walking in the universe like a free man, it was evident that God had accepted His sacrifice and His substitution, and that man in Him was delivered from his offenses.

II. Now, let us examine the second of these couplets: "Seen of angels"—or messengers, which the word means—"preached among the nations." This answers the question, "Why was Jesus Christ?" Why was all this manifestation of God in the flesh and justification of the Godhead in Him by the spirit? This couplet answers. Inasmuch as Christ's death for our sins, and resurrection for our justification, were

necessary to the salvation of mankind, it was necessary also that He should be preached among the Gentiles as the world's Saviour. I think that the first part of this second couplet includes, in the word "messengers," not only angels, but men.. His resurrection must be made an established fact beyond any reasonable doubt ; and so Paul, in the fifteenth chapter of I Corinthians, gives us an account of the various appearances of Christ after He was risen from the dead, enumerating them in order, and closing with the appearance to himself, to whom Christ appeared as to one born out of due time ; and he tells us that He was seen by about five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remained at the time that he was writing, though some had fallen asleep. You perceive with what infinite pains God made clear the fact that Jesus Christ had risen from the dead, so that there is no fact of all history that is more abundantly affirmed and confirmed by many and various witnesses than the fact of Christ's resurrection. For forty days He continued with His disciples, eating and drinking with them after He was risen from the dead, and instructing them in the matters pertaining to His kingdom. The theory that Christ simply appeared to His disciples like a phantom, or ghost, or an illusion, will not hold for a moment ; for ghosts and phan-

toms do not discourse about spiritual mysteries, and do not eat and drink and continue to accompany people intelligently in converse with them for forty days. I say again, there is no event of all history more abundantly established by many infallible proofs than the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

And so He was preached among the Gentiles, or nations, as the world's Saviour. We take up the witness of these great facts from those who, before us, have taken the testimony of those that preceded them; and so there is an apostolic succession, of the truest and grandest sort, that reaches back, through generations of believers and ages of church history, to the time when the disciples, who themselves met Christ repeatedly after His resurrection, gave their witness to this great fact.

III. Now, we come to the third couplet. Where is he?

> "Believed on in the world:
> Received up into glory."

I want this to be the climax of this text and of this discourse; and may God help me, first of all, to speak in His name, and then help you to hear and heed this testimony of the precious Word of God.

"Believed on in the world:
Received up into glory,"

or "caught up into glory." Christ is here and He is also there. He is here, because He is in every believer's heart; He is there, because He is exalted at the right hand of God to be a Prince and a Saviour. And let us not fail to notice that Jesus Christ is not only in the whole body of believers, but He is in every believing soul. We sometimes lose sight of what may be called the individuality of redemption, by referring all the wonderful things said about Jesus, and His indwelling by the Spirit, to the collective body of disciples. He is not only in the great body of believers—the Church—but He is in the body of everyone who believes. Paul and Peter say not only that we are stones in a temple and are built up into one spiritual house, but Paul asks, "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?"—not the Body of Christ, not the whole body of believers, but "*your body* is the temple of the Holy Ghost, and the Spirit dwelleth in you." And what does Jesus Christ say in that magnificent promise in the twenty-third verse of the fourteenth of John? "If any man love Me he will keep my words, and my Father will love Him, and we will come *unto him* and *make our abode with him*." "With *him*;" that is to say, with every

individual believer. If you love and obey Christ, if your heart goes out to Him in holy reverence and supreme obedience, if you open all the avenues of your nature to the entering in of the Son of God by His Word and by His Spirit, He and the Father, as well as the Holy Ghost—the triune God—come down from the high and holy place which They inhabit, and in your humble and contrite heart make Their personal dwelling. There is not a man, a woman, a child, who believes in Jesus Christ, who is not a temple of the Holy Ghost. And, as God looks down upon such believers He values you more, individually, as His temple than the most magnificent cathedral ever erected. St. Paul's and Westminster Abbey, and the cathedrals of Cologne and Strasburg, Florence and Milan, and St. Peter's at Rome—all these costly and sumptuous buildings are as nothing to Him, who more prizes a humble, contrite, believing soul as His abode than the stateliest of all temples erected from the foundation of the world. And He would have you to appreciate this fact, and with deep thanksgiving to recognize it; that, if you in your heart worship and obey your Master and Lord, He is in your heart as an indwelling power and presence. Each of you can, therefore, test this gospel for yourself. You need not be at the mercy of other people and their

testimony. Go into your secret place, commune with your Father who is in heaven, through Jesus Christ your Lord, and, by the power of the Holy Ghost, let God unfold to you His presence and His power within you. That is the standing miracle of the ages. That is the personal and perpetual testimony unto God. That is the great apologetic of Christianity. That is the whole system of "evidences" concentrated in a believing soul—the portable evidence of Christianity.

I have but one more of these phrases to consider, and that lifts us to the highest heaven of praise and glory and adoring worship. "Caught up into glory." What does that mean? Let us not refer this to Christ's resurrection. It refers to a grander event—the event of His ascension! We make far too little of this glorious fact—our Lord's ascension. His incarnation was wonderful; His temptation in the desert was wonderful; His passion in Gethsemane was wonderful; His death on the cross was wonderful; His resurrection from the grave was stupendous; but His ascension overtops them all in majesty, divinity, power, and glory. And, because the ascension of our Lord is so little thought of, even by ministers of Christ and believing disciples, I pray God that I may speak as becomes this august theme in these closing words.

Now, what is it that constitutes the ascension of Christ—His rapture into the glory—as, thus far, the consummation of all the wonders of redemption?

Let me say very briefly that, ever since Jesus Christ came into this world, there has been a deadly conflict going on between the prince of darkness and the Prince of Light, between the prince of this world and the Prince of the Kingdom of God. We cannot stop now to trace the successive stages of this conflict. Every time that the devil met Jesus in deadly encounter it was more desperate and more daring on his part, and his defeat more terrible and overwhelming; for Jesus Christ not only overcame him in every instance, but with more and more overwhelming victory.

When Christ ascended up on high, if there ever was an occasion when Satan would have desired to prevent such a consummation, it was then; for remember that, when Jesus Christ came down in the incarnation, He brought God down to man; but when He ascended, He bore man up to God. If Satan would fain have prevented God from coming down to man, how much more would he have prevented man ascending to God! Remember, he tempted Adam in the garden, and the slime of the serpent has been over all human powers and pleasures ever

since. The fairest flowers of Eden may remain among us, but they are wilted and withered. The paths of paradise may be dimly seen, but they are covered with the tracks of the serpent. But, mark the stupendous mystery! the very humanity that in the first Adam had fallen was, in the ascension, mounting to the throne of glory! The very humanity that Satan had trod down, in the dust of wreck and ruin, in Eden, was, in the second Adam, mounting above all principalities and powers and dominions and every name that is named, and ascending the steps of the throne of the universe to sit down with God in the equality of His imperial reign. And, when that cloud hid from the disciples' eyes the ascending Saviour, who can tell what conflict between the prince of the power of the air and the ascending Christ that cloud may also have hidden from mortal eye? I think I see in the Word of God some indications of this conflict, not only in the passage already quoted, but in that found in the fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians: "When He ascended up on high He led captivity captive and gave gifts unto men." It needs but the smallest acquaintance with ancient history to understand this language. It is drawn from the customs of great generals, when they had accomplished a wonderful victory; they entered

the city of Rome, in triumphal procession, with captives behind them laden with golden chains; and it sometimes occurred that the very generals that had defeated the Roman army were themselves in turn defeated, and brought in chains to Rome to be sacrificed. Now, Jesus Christ at the grave had been triumphed over, for a time, by the power of Satan, the great destroyer; and then, when He broke the bands of death asunder, and triumphed over Satan, He in turn trod him down in awful defeat; and now the very Satan that had triumphed over Christ at the grave, and made Him his captive for a time, he was leading, as in chains, up into the very presence of the august God. The ascension was Christ's triumphal procession, when a multitude of captives, the devil at the head, and all the demons that were associated with him in his work of darkness, were in chains, brought low, and the great General-in-Chief, the imperial Captain of our salvation, with His white plume waving, mounted to the throne of God, holding all these fallen angels captive in His train. Then, like an ancient general in his triumphal procession, He distributed his largess of gifts to men; and, as He led Satan and his bands captive, He flung down from the portals of heaven the golden coin of the kingdom, in the gift of the Holy Ghost. And so you and I are enriched

to-day by this celestial currency, because the largess of His ascension triumph has been rained down upon us.

I think I begin to understand something of what the twenty-second and twenty-third and twenty-fourth Psalms mean. The twenty-second Psalm is the psalm of His death. The twenty-third Psalm is the psalm of His burial. The twenty-fourth Psalm is the psalm of His ascension, and it closes with this magnificent challenge: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in, Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory." It is the appeal to the heavenly gates to unfold on their golden hinges, and let the King of glory, mighty over all foes, enter and take final possession of His throne.

There may be some, even in this audience of believers, who have never admitted the King of glory into the innermost recesses of the heart, and I entreat you, in the name of our ascended and glorified Saviour, to speak to your own hearts this day, and say, Lift up your heads, O

gates of my soul ; even be lifted up, ye doors of my heart ; and let the King of glory come in. Who is the King of glory ? The Lord strong and mighty to overcome the power of your sin, as He has overcome already its penalty, and then to banish the presence of sin by and by. Lift up your heads, O ye gates of my soul, and be ye lift up, ye doors of my heart. Let the King of glory come in. Who is this King of glory ? The Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory !

I am sure that, with me, you would all like to give expression to the rapture of your own hearts in adoring worship to this King, by singing the two familiar verses that begin and close one of our sweetest hymns. And as we rise and sing these two verses, let every voice join. And you that have never believed in Jesus and taken Him as your Saviour, let your heart's adoration go out in these verses, and hail Him as your Crowned King !

"All hail the power of Jesus' name !
Let angels prostrate fall ;
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of all !

"Oh, that with yonder sacred throng
We at His feet may fall .
We'll join the everlasting song,
And crown Him Lord of all !"

THE PRIVILEGES OF SAINTS.

V.

THE PRIVILEGES OF SAINTS.

"The Spirit itself beareth Witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together."—ROMANS viii, 16, 17.

ONE of the highest privileges of a preacher of the gospel is to search into the riches of the grace of God, as found in the eighth chapter of Romans. We shall take a survey of the entire chapter; for I design to call attention to the line of thought which runs through it. The sixteenth and seventeenth verses give us the pivotal point of this glorious gospel message.

"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ."

The eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans is one of the mountain-tops of the New Testament. It is the grandest thing that the Apostle Paul ever wrote, if we may compare one

utterance of the inspiring Spirit with another. If Paul had never written anything else but this chapter, he has here given us a continent of thought, as broad as the grace of God ; and we might spend eternity in studying that chapter, and still feel that we had touched but the borders of this wondrous theme.

The verses selected as the text form the exact center of the whole Epistle. If we leave out the epilogue—the salutations at the close—taking the argument of the Epistle from the first chapter to the last, the exact verbal center is the sixteenth and seventeenth verses of this chapter ; and the logical center of the whole argument is in these words, " We are the children of God ; and if children, then heirs."

The two words—" children," " heirs "—naturally suggest the whole train of our thought. It is well, in all preaching, to avoid preconceptions of our own, so as to follow the thought of God ; and praying that the Spirit Himself may guide our thoughts, let us first settle for a little while, like a bee on a flower, and consider the word "children," and then, going from flower to flower like the same bee, find a little more of the honey that is in the word " heirs." For the word " child " expresses the simple idea of being born of God, belonging to Him; but the word " heir " suggests the idea of being one in a family of

children that had come together into the inheritance of an estate. And so the word "child" represents the position of a child as such; and the word "heir" suggests the position of a child in the family, as a member of the family. In this chapter, there are twelve great thoughts that have to do with the sons of God, six of them referring to the child life, and six of them referring to the family life.

First of all, how does Paul get to the eighth of Romans? How does he get to the point in the argument where we have now met him?

All these previous seven chapters are taken up in describing the condition of a soul that has not yet found perfect rest and satisfaction in God. The first chapters especially exhibit the fact that all mankind are in a state of sin and misery, and can find no hope except in Christ. There are three words in these previous chapters that express the condition of a soul up to the time when he becomes a child of God: "condemned," "enslaved," "dead"; condemned by the law; enslaved, or sold as a slave under sin; and dead in trespasses and sins. If we are to be children of God, we must manifestly get out of this threefold state; and so the apostle begins this chapter by reminding us that a child of God is no longer condemned, is no longer enslaved, and is no longer dead. He says,

"There is therefore now *no condemnation*," no longer condemned; "the law of the *spirit of life*," no longer dead; "hath made me *free*," no longer enslaved. So we cannot open this chapter without seeing that the condemned, the enslaved, and the dead one has come to be justified and free and alive unto God in Jesus Christ. That is the starting-point; and if that is the starting-point, what must the goal be?

1. As I have said, six of these thoughts have to do with the child as a child; and the first of them is this—the *spiritual life*. "The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus." Every child begins by being alive. The breath of life, which the newborn babe first inspires, marks the entrance upon its existence. How beautifully we are taught here that the first sign that we are children of God is that we have spiritual life! The word "spirit" means breath, because there is no symbol that represents the idea so beautifully as that the Spirit of God is the breath of God. When God created man out of the dust of the ground He breathed into his nostrils the spirit, or breath of lives—it is plural—not only animal life and soul life, but spirit life, breathed into man as His image; and when man sinned, he lost the spiritual life. Made, at first, body, soul, and spirit—a house of three parts; basement, which is the body; intermediate

story, which is the soul, with its various faculties of intellect and heart; but, above that all, the upper story with windows that look out on heaven, and through which man had communion with God. When man sinned, that upper story became a "death chamber," and so it remained until Jesus Christ came and breathed on His disciples, and said, "Receive ye the Holy Spirit—" the breath of God, again. Now the little child of God begins by thus breathing, and the Spirit is represented as being the element in which the child of God lives. We read in this chapter that ye are "in the Spirit if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you." Some say, "I do not understand that: how can I be in the Spirit, and the Spirit in me?" But there is no contradiction. If you go down to the seashore and dip a pitcher in the waves, the water is in the pitcher, and the pitcher is in the water. We call the air the element of the bird, because the bird lives in the air; but while the bird is in the air, the air is in the bird. We call the element of the fish water, because the fish is in the water, and the water is in the fish. And the Holy Ghost is the element of the Christian disciple, because he is in the Holy Ghost, and the Holy Ghost is in him. And so Jude says, "praying in the Holy Ghost." When you pray truly, you are like a man in the atmosphere,

which he is breathing in and breathing out; and when you pray to God you are first in-breathing the Spirit, and then out-breathing the Spirit in prayer to God. And so the Spirit of God is the breath of your life that you constantly inspire and expire. You are living in the Spirit ; the Spirit is living in you.

2. The second sign of a child of God is the *spiritual mind.* We read here that the "carnal mind is enmity against God ; it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." But we read also that, "They that are after the Spirit mind the things of the Spirit," and "to be spiritually minded is life and peace." That means that, if you have the Spirit of life in you, you will have the mind of the Spirit in you too. That is to say that, as a living child begins to think, to be conscious, to exercise the powers of the mind that God has given him, so the child of God will begin to exercise and develop the mind of the Spirit that has been given him in his regeneration. What is the "mind of the Spirit"? and what is it to be carnally minded? To be carnally minded is to turn your eyes downward, and to be spiritually minded is to turn your eyes upward. To be carnally minded is to think about earth and earthly things, and labor for them, and desire them, and strive to accumulate earthly wealth

and enjoy earthly pleasure, and shut out the things of God from your sight. To be "spiritually minded" is to turn your eyes away from earth, to give yourself wholly up to God, and to be filled with a desire after God, and holiness, and heaven. You may write over this eighth chapter of Romans three very similar words, and they will explain that "spiritual mind." They are the words, "reference," "deference," and "preference." That is to say, a child of God who is spiritually minded lives with supreme reference to God, with supreme deference to the will of God, and with supreme preference for the approbation of God.

3. The third thing about the child of God is his *spiritual walk.* Of course, we can pass over these thoughts only in a hasty way, depending upon a congregation of true disciples to take these suggestions and outlines and make them the basis of their own studies. If you do not follow up, like the Bereans, whatever you hear, by searching the Scriptures daily, to see whether and how far these things are so, you lose, after all, the greatest part of the inspiration and real instruction of preaching. What, then, is the next thing about the child of God? We are taught that, being led by the Spirit, he walks in the Spirit. A little child, born into a family, not only breathes, and gives evidence

of having a mind, but he soon begins to walk, under the leadership of those that are older. You take hold of both hands at first, and help the child to learn to stand and take a step; and then you lead by one hand, and then, by and by, just by the tips of the fingers, so that the child feels that he has a support, though he has not: and so he learns to walk alone. So, in this chapter, we are taught that the Spirit of God takes the little child of God, and leads him along so that he learns first to stand in Jesus, and then to walk in Jesus. What is it to walk? To walk in God is to make progress, though I am afraid some of us do not walk very fast, and do not learn to walk very soon. There are three words in the New Testament that cover our whole experience as disciples: "stand," "walk," "sit." The word "stand" represents the position I get into in Christ the moment I believe. I come to Him, and put my foot on the solid standing-place, my justification in Jesus Christ. Before, I was on quicksands or in the mire; now I get my feet on the immovable rock. What is walking? That is making progress after I have learned to stand; making progress in daily sanctification nearer and nearer to my Father's house, my Father's heart, and my Father's image. And what is it to sit? It is to get past both the standing and

the walking, and take my place with Jesus Christ on His throne in heaven, made perfect in holiness according to the image of God. But, before he can sit down with Christ above, the little child must learn to walk after the Spirit of God in the ways of God. We never ought to be satisfied if we do not take steps toward God every day of our lives.

4. Then the next thing is *spiritual talk.* We expect the child to learn not only to walk, but to talk. And there are common words, used by children when they begin to use the organs of speech. Did you ever think whence came the words "papa" and "mamma"? Most words we can trace to an etymological source; we can find in the study of language and grammar the roots from which they came; but you can find no etymological source for "papa" and "mamma." They come from the grammar of nature, the etymology of nature. When a child begins to talk, he uses the simplest consonants and the simplest vowels; and because he knows how to make but one syllable, he repeats the syllable. And so he says "papa" and "mamma." God gives us the spirit of adoption, and we cry, "Ab-ba." That is the Aramaic for "Papa." It is the two simplest syllables repeated, Ab-ba. The spirit of adoption comes into the child of God, and teaches him to look

up into the Father's face, and say "Papa, papa!"

When one can walk and talk, he has access or approach to the Father. In this chapter we are told that the Spirit who leads us, and teaches us to say "Father," also teaches us to pray—"maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered." The family affords us a homely illustration. A father goes away to his business, and comes home at night. His little boy has something to ask of him, and is a little timid about it; and he does not exactly know how to put it, but he wants something. His mother says, "Now, when father comes home to-night you shall go and ask him yourself," and the child is all in a state of excitement. When the father comes home the mother takes the boy by the hand, and leads him up to his father; and if he is a little timid, she says, "Don't be afraid; he is your father; ask him for whatever you want." And if he tries to ask something, and does not get it out with clearness, she says, "Father, this is what he wants to say to you," and puts it in her own language. This precious eighth of Romans gives us some such picture of God's family life. The Spirit of God takes the little child of God, and leads him along to the Father; and then, as he approaches, and is a little timid, the Spirit of God

whispers to him—just like a mother—"Now, do not be afraid, He is your father"—witnessing with our spirit that we are the children of God—and teaching us to say, "Abba—Father." Then, as we go to God, and try to put before Him our request, and do not exactly know how, the Spirit takes up the imperfect prayer and says, "Father, this is what the child wants," and so interprets our desires in his own dialect in the Father's ears. I have got down into this blessed chapter for days at a time, like a sponge asoak in a bowl, to absorb something of this wonderful revelation of the love of God to His dear children.

5. What is the next thing? *Spiritual Growth.* God does not want us always to be children; He would have us get out of our infancy and minority and be full-grown; not always remaining "children, carried about with every wind of doctrine," but growing up "into the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Growth is a twofold process; there is effluent and affluent action, excretion and secretion, adding to and throwing off. So with the child of God. Two things are taught in this chapter as to growth. "If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." Now what is mortification? Throwing off that which is dead. And then, on the other hand,

we are taught that we must be led of the Spirit, and instructed and guided by the Spirit, and so become more and more like God, conformed to his image; that is the other side of growth. Mortification on the one side, sanctification on the other; throwing off what is old and dead on the one hand, taking on what is new and living on the other; taking food into us, becoming built up by it; and casting out the waste—the refuse and poison of evil. The child of God thus grows by the daily mortifying of the deeds of the body, and the daily vivifying of the Spirit through Christ Jesus: the daily putting off of the old man of sin, the daily putting on of the "new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." We make another great mistake if one day passes without a new mortification of the old deeds of the flesh, without a new putting on of Christ Jesus by the sanctification of the Spirit.

6. So the child comes at last to what is called in the chapter before us '*adoption*." That word "adoption" here means "majority." I used to stumble at that word "adoption." People adopt children when they have none of their own by nature; but as the Lord begets children in His own likeness by the natural process of regeneration, He does not need to adopt them. Adoption

does not here mean taking into the family a child that is not born into the family, but is somebody else's child. "Adoption" means here attaining "majority." In the Latin language the word "*adoptio*" referred to the declaration of a son's majority. When a young man attained the legal age, his father took him into the Forum, and from the Bema or platform, said to the citizens, "This is my son; he has now come to full age; he inherits my name, my property, my social position." Then he took off the *toga prætexta*—the boy toga, or coat—and put on the *toga virilis*, the manly toga, the coat of a man; he invested him, in the presence of the citizens, with the sign of full manhood, and said, "This is my son." Paul seems to refer to this: "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. . . . . The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now . . . waiting for the *adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.*" In your minority you are but children; when you come to your majority you are full-grown sons. There is a day of revelation coming, of manifestation when God shall take you as His child and set you on the Forum of the universe, and He shall, be-

fore that universe, say, "Bear witness, this is my son; in Christ he is the joint-heir of my name, of my nature, of my dignity, of my possessions, of my throne." And then we shall lay aside the body of our humiliation, the toga that we wore when we were minors; and put on the body of our glory, which is the garment we shall wear when we get to our majority; and this new investment of the redeemed son of God in the presence of the universe is ADOPTION.

II. Now let us turn to consider, for a few moments, the *family life* indicated in this epistle. The child of God is also a member of a family. There are also six thoughts that have to do with this.

1. The first of these great thoughts about the family life is *conformity to one likeness.* In human families we find that what is called "heredity" sometimes takes strange freaks. Here is a child that does not look like either the father or mother; you have to go back to the grandfather, to the grandmother, or to the great grandparents, before you find the type of likeness which that child inherits. It may be so in human families, but it is not so in God's family. There are no such freaks there. Every child of God, born into God's family by regeneration, receives the likeness of God, is conformed to the image of God's dear Son, so that

the Son stands as the "first-born among many brethren," all bearing the same likeness. That is the first peculiarity of the child as a member of the family, that he looks like the Father, and like all other true members of the family—there is a likeness to God, a conformity to the image of his dear Son, the spiritual heredity in which we inherit, first of all, the nature of God.

2. Secondly, *harmony with the family.* We know that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose." Ah, sinner! do you know that you are not in God's harmony? But the moment you come into this blessed harmony you are like a stray planet that again wheels into its orbit round the sun; nothing can harm you if you are a member of the family of God. You know that in a well-regulated family there is this peculiarity: there is not a child that is not thought of, and there is not a need of any child that is not thought of. He may be a life-long cripple, but he is always remembered, morning, noon, and night, and every hour; and just so God never forgets one of His children. You may be never so obscure in human eyes, you may live down in the lowest slums—God never forgets you. There is no need that He overlooks; there is no cry, or upward glance of your eye, that He does not

hear or see. You are in God's harmony, and all things work together for your good, even the things that seem to be working together for your harm.

3. And so this family life insures *each child's security*. We are not always secure under our human father's roof: lightning may strike the house, or earthquake may rock it; disease and death may enter into it, and famine, and all kinds of calamity; but there is no want of security in our Father's family. His Divine arms are beneath us, they hold us up; and His precious wings are over us, and they are the roof under which we hide and abide. There can no evil befall us if we are children of God: "If God be for us, who can be against us?" is the apostle's fond exclamation.

And not only is there such security as this; but there is no separation. This chapter opens with "no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus," and ends with no separation from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. So we are absolutely secure. We have conformity to His image, we have harmony with His laws and with His family life, and we have absolute security under His blessed care and provision and protection, and no possible separation.

4. Then the next thing about the family of

God is *family discipline.* Discipline includes two things—education and correction. I am afraid that in some of our modern families the element of correction is very largely left out, and that one reason why children in these days do not obey their parents, either in the Lord or out of the Lord, is because they are not compelled to. The rod has been broken asunder, or put into the fire, and we lack the persuading influence of chastisement. Our blessed Lord teaches us in the Word of God, and especially in this chapter, that every child of God is to be led by the Spirit, taught, instructed by the Spirit; and is also to be corrected—"the sufferings of this present world are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." My fellow-disciples, have you ever risen to that spiritual height where you are so anxious to be like God that you can say to Him these three words, "Take me, break me, make me?" Sometimes God cannot make us until He breaks us first. I saw, a while ago, a golden cup, that had been made out of old gold coins. They had lost the image and superscription originally upon them, and had been put into the melting-pot and wrought into a new and beautiful vessel. Sometimes God takes poor sinners that have got the image and superscription of God rubbed off them in a

world of sin ; He takes them and breaks them all to pieces, and melts them all up, and then He makes a vessel unto honor out of them. If you want to be made into a vessel of honor you must expect to be broken in pieces first. How beautifully Peter, in the beginning of that first Epistle, says, speaking of the "trial of your faith," that it is "much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire," and that the object of such trial is, that it "might be found unto *praise*, and *honor*, and *glory* at the appearing of Jesus Christ!" Take the figure I have just been using : a goldsmith wants to make a chalice for a king's table. He first takes the metal, and refines it, till he gets all the dross out of it, and then he stamps it approved: that is *praise ;* then he molds it for the honorable purposes to which it is destined, till it takes the shape he designs: that is *honor ;* then he takes the graving tool and the polishing instrument, and covers it all over with inscriptions and ornamental devices, and makes it glow like the sun, and sets it round with gems, until it flashes back the many colors of the rainbow : that is *glory*. So the Lord takes you, and puts you into His crucible, refines away your dross, and puts on you the mark of approval: that is praise or approbation. Then he makes you into a vessel of honorable character,

for His purpose: that is honor. Then He grinds you on the wheel of affliction, and finishes you with His polishing instrument and His graving tools, until you are complete with the glorious likeness of His dear Son: and that is glory.

5. Now another feature of family life: "the *glorious liberty* of the children of God." Some people have a curious idea about liberty; they think that it implies the absence of law. Why, the fact is, liberty implies the presence of law. If you took all law away from this community what sort of a city would London be? I should want to get out of it to-morrow morning early; so would you. It is the very presence of law, and obedience to law, that constitute liberty. And what is more wonderful than that is, that the more you obey the law, the less you know about the law. If you are not stealing, if you are not murdering, if you are not doing anything opposed to the law of this country, you have practically no personal knowledge of law at all. The law sits easily upon you, like a well-fitting garment: but the moment you begin to disobey, the law lays its strong hand on you, and the easy-fitting garment becomes a strait-jacket. Let us understand that it is so as to the law of God. Paul says, like a philosopher, "the law was not made for the righteous man, but for

the lawless and the disobedient." I suppose that Gabriel has no idea of law, because he has never thought of doing a thing that is contrary to the will of God; but just as soon as the angels sinned, and left their first estate, they found there was law, and a terrible law, that held them in its bonds and sunk them down to the depths of perdition. True saints, the more they love to do God's will, the less do they think about God's commands. If you will obey God absolutely in everything possible, you will forget all about law, and there will be for you no law at all; it will be your delight to do the will of God.

6. The last of these blessed thoughts about family life is the *legacy of heirs.* We are heirs, and notice *of what we are heirs.* There are only four things that I can now mention in the wonderful estate that is waiting for a child of God, for you can never make out the full catalogue of that estate. You may say as Paul did, "All things are yours"—he began the catalogue—"whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas"; but he got discouraged, and he used one great word, and said, "and the world." That would not express it all. There is a great deal more than the world, so he added "Life": that would not do; "and death." That is not enough. He added, "Things present": that

is not enough. He said, "Things to come." And even then he could not express all. He had to go back where he began, and he said, "ALL THINGS ARE YOURS." So, do not attempt to catalogue your inheritance, my brother. You can never do it. But I can tell you four things about the inheritance which are very wonderful. In the first place, you are going to have a soul that has no sin left in it. In the second place you are going to have a body made like to Christ's glorious body. In the third place, you are going to have a home in which the slime of the serpent is no more to be seen, and where there are no more tears; and in the last place you are going to have what is greater than all—what includes all—God Himself. Did you ever think of that? We talk about being heirs. According to the human law, a person enters upon the inheritance of another only after the party is dead. The testament has no force while the testator liveth. How can God make you His heirs, since God never dies? Inasmuch as He never dies, He includes Himself in your inheritance. He says, "You shall have Me, and everything else, in Me; you shall have a sinless soul, because you are partakers of my nature; you shall have a resurrection body, because you are like unto my glorious Son, who represents a redeemed humanity; you shall

have this heavenly home, because that is where I live, and I am the center of its glorious attractions." Believers, you are not heirs of God's universe only, but you are heirs of God. Yes, you are "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." Think of that! The Lord Jesus Christ has nothing that you are not going to have and share with Him. "A joint-heir with Jesus Christ." Not that He is going to get the first and main part, and you the subordinate one. Nay, it is not even half and half, for the inheritance is not divided. He has all, and you have all: and so with every other believer—all there is to have belongs to each.

One word in conclusion. Ought we not to be ashamed of ourselves when we go about with our heads bowed down like a bulrush, looking as though we had no friend and no joy? Let the men of grace show that they

> "Have found
> Glory begun below,"

and that

> "Celestial fruits on earthly ground
> From faith and hope may grow."

We have not attained to our majority yet; but, blessed be God! we have the earnest and the foretaste of our heavenly inheritance. It is my privilege, like a child that has not his full prop-

erty yet, to get the interest of that property paid all the time up to the point of majority. I am tired of this talk about cross-bearing, as if that was the whole of the Christian's life. Why, there is a great deal more of the crown in it than there is of the cross: and if we could only persuade poor sinners that this coming to Jesus Christ is not all bearing of burdens, is not all carrying a cross, is not all feeling restrained in our desires and impulses and inclinations, but is being filled with God Himself, might we not lead them to Jesus Christ?

There is a myth about the birds, that when they were first created they had no wings; and the story is, that God made the wings, put them down before the birds, and said, "Now come and take the burdens up and bear them." The birds had beautiful plumage and voices: they could sing and shine, but they could not soar; but they took up their wings with their beaks and laid them upon their shoulders, and at first they seemed to be a heavy load, and rather difficult to bear. But, as they cheerfully and patiently bore them, and folded them over their hearts, lo! the wings grew fast, and that which they once bore, now bore them. The burdens became pinions, and the weights became wings. We are the wingless birds, and our duties are the pinions; and when at first we assume them,

they seem loads ; but if we cheerfully bear them, going after Jesus, the burdens change to pinions, and we, who once thought we were nothing but servants bearing loads, find that we are sons and heirs of God, free to mount up with wings as eagles, running without being weary, walking without being faint. Into just such a blessed inheritance as this, God invites you all upon the simple, single condition of a penitent and believing acceptance of His dear Son !

THE INDIVIDUALITY OF GRACE.

VI.

THE INDIVIDUALITY OF GRACE.

"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me."—GALATIANS ii, 20.

STANDING in front of this Table of our Lord, around which is gathered probably as large an assembly of believers as ever met about His Table, vast numbers of disciples coming to give testimony to Him, my mind has, very naturally, been drawn to those precious words in the second chapter and twentieth verse of the Epistle to the Galatians:

"He loved me, and gave Himself for me."

This passage of Scripture is the counterpart to that little gospel of John iii, 16: "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son." Nothing is said in that verse about the *love of Jesus* for sinners, or about Jesus *giving Himself;* it is God's love and God's gift. But

if you put this verse alongside of that, it is like bringing one hand to another in close embrace ; you have the two apposite texts that fit together and give us the whole gospel. God loved the world, and gave His only son ; Jesus loved me, and gave Himself for me.

We shall naturally look at two things in this text : first, what it says about *Jesus ;* second, what it says about *me.*

He *loved* and *gave Himself.* Was there ever such love as that ? Angels stand and look down into the depths of that love, but even an angel's sounding line cannot reach to the bottom of it. They stand amazed. The intelligence of a cherub and the love of a seraph, blended together, still confess this love unsearchable and unspeakable. Love that was intense, that was impartial, that was universal, that was unselfish, self-forgetting, self-renouncing, and self-abandoning ; love that was toward sinners and enemies ; love that could pray, even on the cross, while hanging by pierced hands and pierced feet : "Father, forgive them ; for they know not what they do." Such was that love !

There is something about the love of Jesus Christ that forbids not only description, but imitation. We can only now and then reflect a single beam from this Sun of Righteousness when we catch the inspiration of its unselfish-

ness. We have been accustomed to say that a mother's love can never be counterfeited, but how much more the Saviour's love ! I remember during the late American War there was a young soldier that was wounded very seriously, and very nigh fatally. He was borne to the hospital, and rapidly became delirious ; but before that he had given the attending surgeon the name and address of his parents. The surgeon, fearing that the worst was near at hand, sent a telegraphic message to his mother, who lived not a great way off. She took the next train and came immediately down to where her son lay in this delirious state. The surgeon met her at the door of the hospital, and he said, "Madam, you must not go in. Your son is hanging between life and death ; the least excitement, even the excitement of meeting you, might turn the scale and prove fatal. You must not go in ;" and there that mother stood in the vestibule of the hospital and looked through the door at her son lying on the cot, and for two or three hours of mortal agony, such as a mother only could experience, she yearned to go and sit by his bedside. Finally, she could no longer endure it, and she beckoned to the surgeon, and said, "Doctor, just let me go and take that nurse's place. I won't say a word to him ; I won't let him know that I am

his mother ; I will not even call him by name or put a kiss upon his brow, but I must go and sit by him ; I shall die if I stay here." "Well," said the doctor, "Madam, you may go if you will solemnly promise me that you will not let him know who you are." She promised. She went in and took the nurse's place. The poor boy was lying with his face toward the wall ; by and by, in the fever of delirium, he turned round for a moment and groaned ; and then as he turned back again toward the wall, she reached out her hand and laid it on the fevered brow. "Why," he said, "nurse, that is *just like my mother's hand.*" If it is impossible to counterfeit a mother's love, who shall counterfeit a Saviour's ! Everything about it, all the tenderness of His ministry—the precious words He spoke to such women as the woman of Samaria at the well, to the woman who was a sinner, in the house of Simon the leper, when she washed His feet with her tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head—all the marvelous majesty and mercy of that ministry defy competition, defy counterfeiting, almost defy imitation. And when Jesus speaks it is the Father's voice, it is the voice of God ; when He touches us, it is the touch of God.

And such love impelled Him to *give Himself* for us ; yes, for *me*, for me, for me. You know

what that self-giving meant. You know what it meant for Jesus Christ to lay aside the mantle of His imperial glory, to come down to earth, take the form of a servant, and in the form of a servant accept the destiny of a malefactor and a slave, and be crucified between thieves, be mocked and jeered at, spit upon and scourged, insulted and outraged, to die as a criminal, and to be buried as a pauper in the sepulcher that was extended to Him as a charity. But the thing that I especially call your attention to, is the fact that He gave Himself for you, *for me.* This idea of substitution runs through the entire Scripture. The blood is everywhere on the Bible ; you cannot find a page that is not blood-red ; and all the events of Old Testament history, and the rites and the ceremonies, and even the Biblical characters, are like pearls that are strung upon a crimson cord, and the cord unites them all, and makes one necklet of grace. In the twelfth of Exodus you read the story of the Passover, the blood sprinkled on the right hand and on the left hand, and on the upper door-post—not on the threshold, because God would not have the blood trampled on as a profane thing—and the children of Israel, hiding behind this blood-stained doorway, and then going out through the blood-stained doorway, as though to indicate that behind the blood was

safety, and when the blood was around them there was deliverance. Then you read the sixteenth of Leviticus and study the great Day of Atonement ; the two kids that were so like each other that they had to be distinguished, as we are told by Edersheim, by a scarlet cord or a scarlet ribbon tied around the neck of the scapegoat, or the goat Azazel, the goat of removal. One kid slain, in order to express the idea that without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins ; and the other standing while Aaron laid his hands heavily upon its head and confessed his own sins and the sins of the people, and then that goat, led away by the hand of a man into the wilderness, where it would never find its way back to the camp to bring the sins of the people before their eyes again. How beautifully that double picture represents Jesus bearing off our sins as the Lamb of God to the cross, and dying for them, and then, as the scapegoat on whose head the sins were laid, bearing them away from the face of God as into some uninhabited wilderness where they never would be brought back to the thought of God, and need not even be brought back to the thought of God's forgiven, redeemed people. And so all through the Word of God there runs this idea of substitution, sacrifice for sin. " In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt

surely die," said God to Adam when he was in the Garden of Eden; and when sin came into this world life was forfeited, and the only way to save man was to have some other life given for the forfeited life. And because "the blood is the life," the shedding of blood represented the giving of the sacrificial life for the forfeited life of the sinner. That key will unlock all the mysteries of the redemptive scheme in the Old and in the New Testaments alike.

Jesus Christ voluntarily *gave Himself* a substitute for the sinner. There are many who say that this was not possible! That it is not *just* that one man should suffer for another, the innocent for the guilty. And the answer is, it would not be just if it were *compulsory*. If God had compelled Jesus Christ, or any other being in the universe, to stand in the place of the sinner, it would have been a manifest injustice; but for Jesus to give Himself a ransom for many was perfectly consistent with justice. Let me give a very simple illustration. A gentleman in Concord, N. H., had long been accustomed to teach boys. On one occasion, his boys having made a rule—as, indeed, they made all the rules of the school—that if anyone transgressed in a certain particular he should be publicly flogged on the platform, and a pupil being found to have committed this offense, he said,

"Boys, what shall I do?" They said with one voice, "He will have to be flogged." He was a little fellow, perhaps about fifteen years of age, and, just as he came up on the platform to receive the merited punishment, his older brother came in at the door. He was a full-grown man, a strong, stalwart fellow. He at once caught the situation. He stepped up to the platform, and he said to the teacher, "Will you allow me to take the punishment of my brother upon myself?" The teacher turned to the school and said, "Boys, do you think that the law of this school will be sufficiently honored if this brother should receive the punishment on his own back?" The boys held up their hands in assent. The brother took off his coat and bared his back while the teacher brought down upon that back the heavy blows that would have been administered to the offender. Now, the law of the school was satisfied and sustained, when the elder brother took upon himself the punishment due to the sin of the younger; the law was magnified and made honorable; but the little fellow escaped the punishment, because someone took it voluntarily upon himself. And so God magnified His law and made it honorable, while our blessed Redeemer took our punishment upon himself, and in our stead suffered on the accursed tree. But then, again, some ob-

jector says, "Jesus Christ did not bear the exact penalty of sin. The penalty of sin was everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of His power; and how could Christ's suffering for a few hours, however great, in the agonies of the cross, be bearing the penalty of sin?" Well, I answer, He did not suffer the *exact penalty* due to the sin, but He suffered an *equivalent* for that penalty. You all understand what the word "equivalent" means. I may have here a bag containing ten thousand copper pennies, and on the other side I may have a very small bag containing about forty sovereigns, the equivalent of these ten thousand copper pennies. Now those are by no means *equal;* if you should carry one and then the other, you would very soon see their inequality; yet the one is an equivalent for the other, and that is the reason why it is unnecessary that we should pay a large debt in copper pence, because we can pay it in that which is equivalent to them—sovereigns, or notes upon the Bank of England. Jesus did not suffer the exact penalty due to sin, and which the sinner would have borne, but Jesus suffered an equivalent before the law, something that the law and justice of God could accept as a substitute and equivalent for the sinner's punishment, and as magnifying the law, just as much as though every sinner

had come to suffer the due exclusion from the presence of God, and the eternal weight of His holy wrath.

Now, having spoken very briefly about how our Lord Jesus Christ loved us, and what He did for us, I especially desire for a few moments to emphasize the *me;* for all that I have said is but the introduction to what is to each believer a most precious word in this text, that same little word *me.* "He loved me, and gave Himself for me." God shows His greatness in this, that even in the mass He never loses sight of the individual. Millions of birds fly in the firmament, and yet there is not a sparrow falls to the ground without His notice. Millions of blades of grass spring up in the field, and millions of lilies bloom in the valley, yet not one of them escapes the oversight of God; He fashions every one of them in His own perfect way by His own divine handiwork. And we are told that the very hairs of our head are all numbered. On the full scalp there may be counted three hundred thousand hairs; how easy then to lose one of them! Constantly and unconsciously they drop from the scalp, and yet there is not one of them all that perishes without God's knowledge; God notices and counts the very hairs on our heads. The stars are as countless as the sands, yet He calleth the stars by name. There is a very

sweet saying in John x, 3 : "He calleth His own sheep by name." Some of you have been in Oriental countries and have seen those shepherds with their great flocks of thousands of sheep, and yet there are some shepherds who know every sheep individually by name. A traveler in Syria saw two flocks of sheep, numbering some thousands, come and drink at one watering trough, and saw each shepherd separate his own sheep and go his own way without losing one, or having one mixed with the flock of the other. He said to one of the shepherds, "How is this possible? Do you know these sheep by name?" "Yes" said he, "I do." "Well," said my friend, "will you call twenty of your sheep by name?" And he called them one after another, and as he mentioned their names, or gave the peculiar call which they recognized, each individual came out from the flock and gathered around the shepherd. Millions of stars —God calls them all by their names. Millions of believers—God calls them all by their names. And, moreover, this traveler said to the shepherd, "How do you distinguish these sheep? I cannot tell any difference between them ; they all look alike to me." "Ah, but," said he, "I will show you how I distinguish them," and he called one sheep : "Do not you see that that sheep's tail is a little crooked?" He called

another: "Don't you see that that sheep, in jumping over some fence, has injured his hind foot?" He called another: "Don't you see that that sheep has got a slit in the ear? Don't you see that other sheep has got a little bend in his nose?" He knew the sheep by their defects. And the Lord knows us by our defects, and He has a great many such marks to recognize. Yes, He knows His sheep by the faults of their temper, and of their will, and of their disposition, and their unguarded speech and their manifold weaknesses and infirmities. He recognizes everyone of us by name, and He recognizes our infirmities, and He has compassion upon them all. He loves each one of us, and cares for each one of us personally. We are told in the eleventh of John, "Now Jesus loved *Mary* and *Martha* and *Lazarus*." How often we thank God for that! It would have been so easy and short to say "Jesus loved the whole family." That would not do; no, "Jesus loved Mary and Martha and Lazarus." So it is with the church in this house; every one of us He can name, and He loves each one separately and individually. And how beautiful is His treatment of Peter! In the twenty-second of Luke, Jesus says, when He warns Peter of the coming temptation, "Behold Satan hath desired to have you"—that is plural, have *you all*—

"that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for *thee*,"—singular—"Peter," because Peter was to be in the depths of a great temptation, and was to deny his Lord three times, and with oaths and curses; and so, while He said, "Satan hath desired to have *you all* that he may sift you as wheat, I have prayed for *thee* that thy faith fail not." See how Jesus followed that same Peter. It seems quite incredible that He should think of one poor, weak disciple when He has the interests of the universe on His hands and on His heart; yet, so it is. When Peter denied his Lord, denied Him again and again, the cock crew; then Jesus turned and looked upon Peter; Peter saw His look, and went out and wept bitterly. And then, when He rose from the dead, the angel conveying the message from Jesus, says to the woman, "Go, tell my disciples *and Peter*." Why "and Peter?" Because Peter had said that he was not a disciple. He had voluntarily cut himself off from the number of disciples, and if Jesus had sent a general message, "Go, tell my disciples," Peter might have said: "That does not mean me; the Lord does not recognize me, for I have said I am not His disciple, and sworn that I am not, and cursed and blasphemed to confirm my oath and my lie." Jesus, therefore, knew how Peter would feel, and He sent a special message to

Peter. If you will compare the gospel narratives, you may see the reason why Peter, when he heard the message, got up and ran toward the sepulcher. He could not restrain his impatience. The Lord had sent for him, had sent word to him, and the only individual message that was sent was to the very man who had denied Him. May this not be the reason that his impetuous nature could no longer be restrained, and so he ran with all his might to the tomb where the Lord Jesus had lain? Oh, yes, he "loved *me*," "gave Himself for *me*."

Paul says in this same chapter and verse, "Christ liveth in me." Not only did He love me and give Himself for me, but He "liveth in me." The thought is that every believer needs a whole Christ for his salvation, and has a whole Christ for his sanctification, his joy, and full redemption. Every little drop of rain or drop of dew gets the benefit of the whole sun. If you look at a drop of rain when the sunlight falls upon it at a peculiar angle, you will get all the colors of the rainbow. Why? Because the *whole sunbeam is in that drop.* In the sunbeam, you know, there are violet, indigo, blue, green, yellow, orange, red, all combined in white light; and when one little drop of rain or dew prismatically separates all these colors and gives the violet, indigo, blue, green, yellow, orange,

red, like the rainbow, it shows that the drop that is so small, nevertheless takes in the whole light : all the light, all the heat, all the life-giving power of the sun blesses every drop. And if you are a child of God there is in God the Father no light or life or love that is not for you, just as much as though there was no other person in all the world to be benefited and blessed and saved and sanctified. God gives the whole Christ for your salvation, sanctification, satisfaction, and glorification. This precious feast of fat things and "wines on the lees, well refined," is waiting to give you a visible token of how your Lord gave His precious blood and body for your redemption. But what is the natural and legitimate outcome of this great deed ? In the first place, every believer can say of God, "*My God.*" Notice the singular personal pronoun—not the God of believers only, but "my God." And not only so, but there is a divine sense in which God is to me what He is to no one else ; there may be a special revelation and communication of Himself to my soul, so that, as though I were brought face to face with God and all other beings in the universe were shut out while I look into His face and He looks into mine, I may appropriate Him wholly as my own, and say "my beloved is mine, and I am His."

Of this personal relation let me give an illustration. When God revealed Himself to Abraham it was by His name Jehovah or Jah; and when Abraham built the altar to the Lord, he inscribed on it, or called upon, the name by which he specially knew God. For instance, when the ram was provided for the offering on Mount Moriah in the place of Isaac, he built an altar, and he called that altar by the name Jehovah-jireh, or Jah-jireh, the Lord will provide. But when God appeared to Jacob He appeared to him specially by the other name of God, El, the Almighty. And this name of God is traced all through Jacob's experience. For instance, when he took the stone on which he had been reclining for a pillow and set it up to be a sign of God's house, and poured oil on it, he called the name of the place "*Beth-el*," not Beth-jah, not the house of Jehovah, but the house of El, the house of God, as God made Himself known to him in His wisdom. Then, when in the struggle at the ford of Jabbok he received the blessing from above, he called the name of the place "*Peni-el*," the face of El; and God said "Thy name shall no longer be Jacob, but *Is-ra-el*, prince of El." Then, when he went back to Bethel, he called the name of the place "El-beth-el," El, the house of El. Meanwhile another altar had been erected, and on it he placed

the name "*El-elo*he-Isra*el*," El, my El, of the Prince of El. But what does that mean but that my God is *my* God, and that He is a different God to me from what He is to you, because of the special revelations He makes of Himself to me? because He comes down to me in my infirmity, and in the boundlessness of His compassion takes me up in His arms and calls me by my particular name, He bears to me a particular name that is all my own. He may be Jah to Abraham, but He is El to Jacob; He is Jesus to me, and He is my Jesus. He has His own name, His own attributes, His own exhibition of Himself to me as a humble believer. Hence in Revelation we read: "I will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it."—Rev. ii, 17. May God give us at least a touch of the mystery and majesty of that mercy that can make it possible for Him to come down to one insignificant disciple and reveal the whole of Himself to him as though there was no one else to whom He needed to reveal Himself.

When the blacksmith welds two pieces of iron he puts both into the furnace and sends the blast through it until they are at white heat. Then he places them on the anvil, one upon the other with nothing between, and brings down the huge

hammer upon them, and so welds the two into one. Jesus would unite you with Him. He says, "Poor sinner, lovest thou Me? Follow thou Me." As William Arnott said, He puts the "thou" upon the "Me" with naught between, and so welds the two into unity. Will you be united with Jesus? Then it is very simple; let Him put the "thou" and the "Me" together, while you gladly consent to have nothing henceforth come between your Lord and you. If there is a poor sinner that has come in here without Christ, if there is some stray soul, wandering from the Father's house without peace and rest, open your inmost heart now; and while the Lord Jesus says, "Poor sinner, lovest thou Me? Follow thou Me," let your heart respond "Jesus, I accept Thy love and sacrifice for me, and from this time forth, forgiven, redeemed by blood, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest."

LIFE BY BELIEVING.

VII.

LIFE BY BELIEVING.

"But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, ye might have life through His name."—John xx, 31.

"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life."—I John v, 13.

THESE two texts belong together. The first of them teaches us the object for which the Gospel according to John was written: "That ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, ye might have life through His name." The second text gives us the reason why the First Epistle of John was written: "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life." The gospel was written that we might *have* life; and the first Epistle of John was written that we might *know* that we have life.

We take up the first of these great themes, and leave the other to a subsequent occasion.

Life eternal through believing is the subject of

the Gospel according to John. When God gives a key, it is very sure to unlock all the mysteries to which it pertains ; and when we have such a divine key, it is quite in vain for us to look for any human interpreter. The Gospel according to John has a divine key attached to the lock, and we have only to turn the key, and the door is opened into the mysteries of this gospel.

Here we shall find the expression "life" or "eternal life" about eighty times ; and we shall find the expression "believe" about forty times. This is sufficient to show that the gospel fulfills the purpose for which it is declared to have been written. While you will not find in this gospel, in a single instance, the word "repent," you will often find the word "believe"; and, moreover, notice how explicitly the apostle puts this whole matter. "These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God." It is not often that those three titles of our Lord are put together, but they are here put together for a specific purpose. Jesus is the human name. "Thou shalt call His name Jesus," was said to Joseph before Christ's birth. "Christ," which means anointed, is the Saviour's Messianic name ; it is His name as the Messiah. And "the Son of God" is the Saviour's divine name, and so we have here the three great titles — "Jesus," the human ;

"Christ," the Messianic; and "the Son of God," the divine title; and these things are written that ye might know that Jesus the human child was Christ, the anointed Messiah, and that both represent the Son of God.

Now, again, the Bible is a kind of encyclopedia and a lexicon combined; that is to say, it gives universal information about the subject of eternal life, and it defines the terms that it uses. My simple object, as the organ of the Spirit and the Word of God, is to lead inquiring minds into the study of the subject of eternal life. I should be glad, if the time allowed, to consider every instance of the more than forty in this gospel in which the terms "life" or "eternal life" are used. But let me at least call attention to this gospel as a revelation of *the way in which eternal life becomes ours through believing.* Not only does it fully treat this great subject from its first to its closing chapters, but the inspiration of this gospel is partly seen in the fact that, in every case in which eternal life is referred to, some *new conception* with regard to it is added to what goes before. It is even more remarkable that these additions follow what may be called a *progress of doctrine* in this Gospel according to John. That is to say, the unfolding is gradual, systematic, regular, so that in no instance what we

are taught, about eternal life, could change places with what precedes or follows, showing that the apostle John, in following the narrative of the life of Christ as recalled to his memory by the Holy Spirit, was also led by the same Spirit, and probably without his own recognition of the fact, to unfold gradually, systematically, logically, and progressively the whole subject of eternal life.

This you will see for yourself, if you will gather together the scattered references to eternal life within the bounds of this gospel, and thus make a systematic and orderly presentation of the whole subject.

The first reference to life in this gospel narrative is found in the fourth verse of the first chapter. "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." Now, why should life in Jesus Christ be first presented to us under the figure of light? Because the first approach of Jesus Christ to a human soul, as the life of God, is in His light-giving power. To show you that you are a sinner and need a Saviour—that you are condemned by the law and need reconciliation and forgiveness—that hell opens beneath your feet, and that you certainly will fall into perdition if you are not renewed by the power of God and lifted to heaven—to show you your disease and your physician, your need and your

supply, your destitution and your divine provision—that is the first office of Jesus Christ. He cannot give life until He has given light; and whether you get the life will depend upon whether or not you follow the light, whether you open your heart to the incoming of the light, and rejoice even in the smiting of a righteous God, and turn from your sin to your Saviour.

Jesus is the Sun of righteousness, and from the sun there come three beams in one, the beam of light, and the beam of heat, and the beam of life. And so Jesus Christ, as the Sun of righteousness, throws out a threefold beam, light and love and life; but the light is first recognized, and, if you receive the light, you get the love and the life besides.

The next reference to life in this gospel is found in the third chapter, verses 14–16. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life; for God so loved the world, that he gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Here first the term "everlasting life" or "eternal life" occurs, and is found twice, and something important is added to what was previously taught us.

Why is this "*eternal* life," not "*immortal* life?" Why should not God have said that whosoever believeth in Christ should have *immortal* life? "Eternal life" is more than "immortal life," for eternal life has no beginning nor end. And there is a reason why the Spirit should say that the believer in Jesus Christ shall have *eternal*, not immortal life. Suppose you are born of a certain noble sire and mother, and trace your lineage back through all the generations to a remote antiquity, you, as a child in the family, are not only entitled to all that pertains to that family in the future, but you inherit all that pertains to that family in the past. The glory of its past history, of its achievements, of its heroism on the battlefield, of its services in the state or Church; the glory of its learning, of its patriotism, of its philanthropy—you, as a child in that family, come into the inheritance of it all. And so there is a spiritual heredity. If I am a child of God by faith in Jesus Christ, all the past of God I inherit as well as all the future of God. Being a child of God, whatever is glorious in the past eternity of God comes to enrich my present and my future. When God has a child born to Him in His family by faith in Jesus Christ, the child does not simply start with the present moment of birth to enjoy a future that shall be blessed,

but God enriches that new heir of glory by all that there is in the glorious past of His eternal existence. You have God for your Father, and all God's past is in Christ your past also.

The next reference is in the third chapter and the thirty-sixth verse. Here is the only instance in the whole Word of God in which there is in the original language a perfect stanza with rhyme and rhythm.*

It might be translated to convey both the rhythm and rhyme :

> "Whoso on the Son believeth,
> Everlasting life receiveth;"

and there is some reason why, in that place alone, the Holy Ghost has framed the message of salvation so as to form a perfect poetic couplet. The heart of the gospel is there : "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life;" and the Spirit of God has put it into a beautiful rhyming Greek couplet that He may call attention to this gem of the gospel.

What idea is added to our previous conceptions of eternal life, when we strike this marvelous verse? We have had "life" and "eternal life" but we have not had that little word "*h-a-t-h,* hath." "He that believeth on

* Ὁ πιστεύων εἰς τὸν υἱὸν
ἔχει ζωὴν αἰώνιον.

the Son *hath* everlasting life" ; not "shall have it." *Hath it.* That is to say, eternal life is the *present possession* of the believer.

> "The moment a sinner believes,
> And trusts in his crucified God,
> His pardon at once he receives,
> Redemption in full through His blood."

That is to say, if you came here to-night, a poor wretched, unsaved sinner, and while you are here in the presence of God, open your heart to the light and love and life of Jesus, you can pass out of this house saved ! Nay, salvation may come to you in a moment of time, if you hear and obey the voice of the living God. We often say, in our prayer-meeting talks and prayers, that we hope that we *shall* be saved. But if you believe, you *are* saved ; and would to God you might have the joy of the present salvation in your soul! It is a reproach to God that we should so often go to Him, years after we have taken Jesus Christ to be our Saviour, and have begun to walk in the narrow way with Him, and ask that, after we have completed our course on earth, He would finally save us. We have salvation already. It is only the consummation of that salvation that will come by and by. If you trust in Jesus you are saved now. It is a real and a present salvation.

In the fourth chapter we find that beautiful narrative about the woman at the well. "If thou knewest the gift of God, and Who it is that saith to thee, Give Me to drink; thou wouldst have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water." Christ says, moreover, to this woman at the well, "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." A most remarkable kind of water that is, indeed! Water from earthly springs has no such property as that. If I am thirsty I drink this water, and shortly my thirst returns, and I must have some more to quench the new thirst; but Jesus says "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well"—or spring of water—"springing up into everlasting life." Notice the progress of thought: *a drink, a spring, a stream.* I thirst; I come to Christ, and ask the living water. It is proffered to me in the golden vessels of His grace. I take a drink, and lo, my thirst is quenched! But not only so. That water has the power in me like to that of the seed when put into the earth. The seed begets a plant, and the plant bears other seeds like unto the first. And this water which enters into me, to quench my thirst, becomes in me a spring like unto the source

from which that water came, and out from this spring runs a stream like unto the stream that issued forth from that original spring. And so every soul that is enabled to drink into Christ Jesus is made partaker of the Holy Ghost and the nature of God Himself; and so life becomes within that soul a springing well, and out from the springing well runs a flowing stream, a stream of living water and living testimony unto the Lord Jesus.

In the fifth chapter and the twenty-fourth verse this life is presented as the secret both of the resurrection of the soul and the resurrection of the body. "Verily, verily, I say unto you." —"Verily, verily" is used twenty-four times in this gospel, and always prefaces one of the most important statements which Christ ever makes—"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life." We have had all that before, but He *adds*, "and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." We have already learned that eternal life is the present possession of the believer; but, in order that we shall not mistake our Lord's meaning, He uses another form of expression which is more explicit, clear, and convincing, if possible, than what preceded. Here is a chasm. I am on one side of it; as

soon as I pass across, I am on the other side. Here is a sinner; he stands on this side of eternal life. He crosses by faith; he stands on the other side. He is on different ground. He has "passed from death unto life;" and to make that plainer, it is said, "and shall not come into condemnation." The Greek word is "crisis;" that is, judgment, and it should be so translated: "Shall not come into judgment." I understand by that, that a believing soul shall never come into the judgment of the great white throne. Hundreds of Christian people never seem to have risen to the height where they see their own privileges. It is common among disciples to stand in fear of the judgment. They ask themselves, "How shall I confront God at the great white throne?" *You are never going to confront Him there.* When Jesus Christ died on the cross your sins were judged in Him. He undertook to bear your penalty in His own blessed, precious person. Now, if Christ has been judged for my sins, how can I be judged for them too? If Christ has endured the penalty of my sins, how can I endure the penalty of them too? If Jesus Christ is my Saviour, can my Saviour condemn me? He is "the end of the law for righteousness"—that is, for justification—"to everyone that believeth." But does not the Bible say that "we

shall all appear before the judgment seat of Christ?" Yes, but that judgment seat of Christ is not the great white throne. The judgment seat is the bema. The bema was a platform at the end of the race course, where the judge stood to deliver the prizes to the successful runners in the race. You and I are to be judged at the judgment seat of Christ, not as to the question of our salvation, which has already been settled, but as to the question of our service and its reward, which still remains to be settled. So we shall never come into condemnation, for our salvation is assured, though we shall come before the judgment seat of Christ to receive the proper reward for our service, and to take our places in His kingdom according to the use of the talents or the pounds which He has committed to us. But if this precious gospel teaches anything it is that, if a man believes in Christ, he has passed from death unto life. He can never, therefore, come into death, neither can the question ever be raised as to whether he shall come into life, for he is in life already, and he shall not come into condemnation.

Now, notice, still further: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. . . .

Marvel not at this : for the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth ; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life ; and they have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."

Let us not confuse these two passages of Scripture. The former tells us that the hour is coming, and *now is*, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God. Nothing is said about being in their graves. "The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live," and only "they that *hear* shall live." Manifestly that has nothing to do with the resurrection of the body. It regards humanity as dead in trespasses and in sins. The voice of the Son of God goes forth proclaiming the tidings of saving grace ; and those that, being dead in trespasses and sins, hear that voice, are raised from the death of their sins and their condemnation.

The other passage of Scripture which follows adds, "Marvel not at this : for the hour is coming, in the which all that are *in the graves* shall hear His voice, and shall come forth ; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life ; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." The additional thought put before us is, that if Jesus Christ be-

comes life to you from the dead, so that your soul is raised from its death in sin by the hearing of His voice, then your body also, if it sleeps in the grave, shall hear His voice, and come forth to the resurrection of life. That is to say, the Holy Spirit that becomes an inhabitant in you when you believe in Jesus, and grants you an immediate resurrection of soul in the image of God, becomes the secret of the resurrection of your body also out of the corruption of the grave.

In the sixth chapter Christ presents Himself as the bread of life, and tells us that whosoever shall partake of this bread shall live forever. In the fourth chapter He teaches us that He is the water of life, and here that He is the bread of life. Water may quench thirst, but it cannot sustain life. Water is not properly food; it makes room for food to digest; it supplies the material for secretion; it expands the digestive organs so that solid food has the opportunity to distribute its properties through the human system; but no man could live on water. He must have solid nutriment in order to be kept alive from day to day and year to year. Jesus, in the fourth chapter, tells that woman of Sychar that He is the water of life, because He is able to satisfy all her yearnings of soul. In the sixth chapter He tells us that he is the bread of life,

because He is the sustenance and the support, the staff of life, to the believing soul. The water satisfies your desire, but the bread supplies your need. The water quenches your thirst, but the bread appeases your hunger. And Jesus Christ says, "He that believeth on Me shall neither hunger nor thirst;" that is, shall neither have unsatisfied or restless yearnings, nor find himself faint or fail because he lacks strength to go on in the right way.

Let us pass to the eighth chapter and twelfth verse, where Jesus says, "He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." In the first reference, in the first chapter and fourth verse, "In Him was life; and the life was the light of men," He is presented as the light of everybody, even of the sinner who does not accept him as Saviour. All he knows about his sins and his salvation comes from the light that shines upon him, even though he may refuse to believe and be saved. But here we are taught that, having had the light shed abroad round us like the sunlight, he that follows that light shall have light *within him.* The reference is undoubtedly to the pillar of cloud and fire. When, in the evening hours of the feast of Tabernacles, they lit up those great candelabra that stood in the court of the women, and flashed their radiance all over the city of

Jerusalem; in that ceremony they celebrated and commemorated the pillar and cloud of fire that accompanied Israel through the weary path of their desert journey. When the tents were pitched, this pillar came down and stood over the cherubim in the holiest place. So our blessed Lord says to us, "If you follow the light as they followed the pillar of cloud, then shall the same pillar of cloud come down and enter your heart; so that you who follow the light shall have it in your own soul."

In the tenth chapter our Lord is teaching the great truth about His sheep, and He says, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." And then, in the 28th and 29th verses He says, "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." I asked myself for years what force there was in this *repetition*, "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand," etc. Eternal life is not only a present possession, but is a true and an inalienable possession. You ask me whether I believe in the perseverance of the saints. I tell you, no. I have no confidence

in the saints and their perseverance ; but I believe in the *perseverance of Jesus Christ.* The reason why the saints persevere is because Jesus Christ perseveres *in* the saints. If the Lord should withdraw His mighty power from me I should drop into perdition. If He, for a moment, forsook me, what would become of me ? Outbreaking sins, outrageous iniquities, a final and fatal apostasy would result. The precious truth is, that it is the keeping power of our Lord and His perseverance which is our hope. Hear what He says: " My sheep hear My voice and I know them, and they follow Me ; and I give unto them eternal life ; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand." And now, as if to make it stronger and mightier in convincing power, He says, "My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." Why are the two hands of Father and Son represented as insuring the keeping of the sheep ?

Here is a watch ; I hold it in my hand. I may have a strong grip and hold it firmly, but if I put the other hand over it and lock the two together, it is going to be very difficult for another to get it out. Here is a wooden rule. When I was a boy, we used to try the power of our grip by taking a rule in our right hand, and

defying some fellow to wrench it out. He would take hold with both hands, and it was almost impossible, if a strong fellow got hold, to prevent its being wrested from your grasp. But suppose you yourself take it in both hands. Then he may swing your whole body from side to side without compelling you to let go. "My sheep shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of *My hand.*" There is *one* hand having hold. "My Father, which gave them to Me, is greater than all ; and no man is able to pluck them out of *my Father's hand.*" There is the other hand laying hold ; who shall pluck the sheep out when held by both those almighty hands ?

I pass over the intervening chapters, to call attention to one more precious thought. In the seventeenth chapter of John and the third verse we read, "And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent." The essence of eternal life is found in a personal, practical knowledge of God in Christ, and that is what these wonderful words mean, which were our starting-point in this study. "These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through His name."

What is His name ? A man's name is that

which specially represents his own personality. My name means myself. Your name means you. The name of Jesus Christ means Him. To have life through His name is to have life through union with Him. You can get no life by using the name of Jesus Christ or even by searching the Holy Scriptures, which have no power to give you life, apart from the Holy Spirit of Life. If you would have life it must be by personal union with Jesus Christ. When a boy at school, I was greatly interested in experiments in natural science, as I am to this day. I remember the first time I saw an electric machine, and being well acquainted with the teacher, he selected me for the first experiment in electricity, which I thought a high honor. I remember the little black-walnut stool with its glass legs, the glass legs being non-conductors to prevent the electricity from passing off into the earth. The teacher stood me right on that stool, and placed the poles of the electric battery in my hand. Then as he turned the cylinder and developed the electricity, I felt it passing from the wires into my body, entering and filling me, until my hairs stood on end, as the electricity sought a point by which to escape. Then as he touched a hair of my head or brought his knuckle close to my arm, the electric spark passed from me, and I felt a slight

shock. But as soon as I got off that stool, the electricity passed from me to the earth. While united to the electrical machine and separated or insulated from all else, I had the electric life in me. The moment I parted from that machine and stood on the earth, I lost the electric fluid.

Jesus Christ represents the life of God. When I take hold of Jesus Christ, and am united to Him, I feel the life of God that is in Him becoming the life of God in me. Apart from Him we are nothing and can do nothing. Joined to Him, the very life that is in God is practically ours.

Let me give one illustration, from my own pastoral life, of how a human soul gets life in union with Jesus. A few years ago, while pastor in the city of Detroit, Mich., there tarried after sermon a man who, with tears, besought a personal interview. He came and sat down by me in my study, and for three hours unfolded to me one of the darkest histories that I ever heard from the lips of a mortal man. I could not in a miscellaneous audience tell that story. It suffices to say that there was scarce one command of the Decalogue, save that concerning murder, which he had not willfully and systematically violated. He was a profane swearer; an habitual drinker; an adulterer; a

liar, and virtually a thief. There was scarcely any sin that had not been his sin ; and, when he unfolded to me that dark history, he said, "Now, do you mean to say that it is possible for such a man as I am to be saved?" "Certainly," I answered ; "certainly." "How long do you think it would take me to be saved?" "Just as long as it would take you to turn your heart to Jesus Christ." "Do you mean," said he, "that I could be saved while I am here in this room?" "Certainly, if you take Jesus Christ as your Saviour." "But have I not got to get rid of all these sins and evil habits of mine, first?" "You are to cast all your sins on the Sin-bearer." "But I must get out of these evil relations in which I am living?" "Yes, by the power of God, when first you have taken Christ to be your Saviour." And so I talked with him for another hour. At last God brought him to the point where he was willing to submit himself at once to the Lord Jesus Christ, and I said, "Let us get down on our knees before God. I will offer a short prayer, and then you pray for yourself." I knelt with him and prayed that Christ Jesus would come into his soul and give him life from above, there and then. And I said, "Now, my friend, pray for yourself." He continued in silence for a few moments, and then began to pray, but he

broke down, and said "I cannot pray." I said, "You must. This is the crisis in your destiny and history. You must call on the almighty God to save your soul." Said he, "I cannot pray." "Well," said I, "try. Let me hear that you cannot pray. If you cannot do anything more, tell God that you cannot pray." And he tried to get up, and said, "Let me up. I know how to curse, but I cannot pray." I drew nearer and put my arm about him, firmly but tenderly holding him down, while I besought him to call on God. Presently, with a great effort, he began to pray. And then I thought that I had never heard a man pray as he did. It was with a stammering tongue, but he poured out into the ears of God all the story of that vile life, and then and there he opened his heart to Jesus Christ and took Him as his Saviour.

We rose from our knees. I say, solemnly, before this audience and before Almighty God, with the full consciousness that I may never preach the gospel again, that I have never known, during thirty years of pastoral life, a case of more full and absolute self-surrender to God, or more absolute and full communication of God to a human soul than in the case of that man on that day. He rose up from his knees a renewed man. He turned from his old sins and habits. His foot was on the head of Satan who

had bruised his heel for many a long year; and he told me not long ago, that from the day when, in my study, he offered himself to Christ to be saved and took Christ as his Saviour, he had *never even had a desire for strong drink*, and that he had never desired tobacco, which he had used in all three forms—smoking, chewing, and snuffing. That man became a minister of Jesus Christ. I had the pleasure of being called to ordain and install him as pastor of a church ; and from that day to this he has been in no field of labor without a continual revival of religion. A deep experience of what Christ can do for a human soul was his ; and men and women have been brought by scores and hundreds to the feet of Jesus through the power of his transformed life.

That simple story shows what Jesus Christ can do for a human soul. If there are any of you here to-night who have not found Christ as your personal Saviour, I pray you turn to Him just now, for I call God to witness that with all humility and fidelity I have preached this saving gospel to you and given you an illustration of the power of this gospel, as I have seen it, not in one life only but in many lives. And may the Lord, out of this audience, gather many unsaved souls to Himself, through Jesus Christ our Lord !

BELIEVING AND KNOWING.

VIII.

BELIEVING AND KNOWING.

"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life."—I JOHN v, 13.

IN the twentieth chapter and the thirty-first verse of the Gospel of John, we read: "These things have I written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, and that believing *ye might have life* through His name." The corresponding passage to this is in the thirteenth verse of the fifth chapter of the First Epistle of John: "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God that ye may *know that ye have eternal life.*"

The gospel was written that men might believe, and believing might receive life everlasting. And now this first epistle is written that such believers may *know* that they have eternal life. In other words, here is *God's touchstone of character*, by which to test the signs and proofs and fruits of godliness, and so dis-

cern whether or not you are a true believer, whether you have the form of godliness without the power, or the power of godliness within the form.

The apostle intimates why it is desirable that every child of God should test himself as to these fruits of faith. He says in the first chapter, "These things write I unto you that your *joy may be full.*" In order to complete joy there is needed an assurance of a saved state, the knowledge of God's divine operation in the soul, the proof and the fruit of the divine indwelling. No believer who doubts his own saved state, and lacks the evidences of it, can be truly happy. Another reason the apostle hints for writing this epistle. He says, "Be not deceived." There is danger of deception; in matters of religion deception is fatal. Many who are members of our churches have practically no experience of godliness. During my public ministry hundreds of professed believers have confessed that they have been for many years confessors of Christ, and yet are persuaded that they have never been converted to God. It has been one precious privilege in my ministry to lead out into light and joy and salvation many such professed disciples, who have had previously the form of godliness without the power thereof.

Deception in matters of religion is especially perilous. There is no more subtle snare of the devil than a profession of Christ without the possession of grace. People come into the Church of God, but, if their hearts have never been really touched by converting grace, they are very prone to mistake their place in the Church for their membership in "the church of the firstborn which are written in heaven," and to cherish a false security through sacraments and ordinances and outward communion with the Church of God, and so sometimes go down into the grave still in a state of awful deception.

By their fruits we shall know them. There is great need once in a while to compare our character and life with God's test-fruits of holiness.

There are five chapters in this epistle, and they all treat the great subject of knowing that we are children of God; and the prominence given to this may be seen in the fact that the word "know," or "knowledge," occurs between forty and sixty times in the course of these chapters. "We know that we are of God." "We know that we have passed from death unto life." "He that loveth, knoweth God." The whole epistle is full of the proofs by which we "know" that we are of God—the justification of such knowledge. More than

twenty distinct evidences of a child of God are given here. It would be impracticable now to take up each of those tests, but we may do a wiser thing to classify these evidences and consider the classes. When men build a house, they quarry the stone, cut, chisel, and fit stones to their places, and then bring them together, and, on the site of the building, erect them into one structure. So we may go down into these chapters as into a quarry, and take out the tests here set before us, and construct them into some simple form that we can keep before our mind and memory.

A careful study of this epistle shows three great words which are very like. They are "*life*," "*light*," and "*love*," and under those three leading words all the evidences of piety, as brought out here, may be arranged. The argument of the epistle is very simple and beautiful. God is *light*, and the fountain whence all light proceeds. God is *life*, the center and source of life, and all life proceeds from Him. God is *love*, the fountain and spring of love, and all love proceeds from Him. And the consequence is, that if I am a child of God, I will bear a likeness to my Father, will have in me God's life, God's light, and God's love. Put those simple sentences together, and you have the whole argument. The quarried stones are erected

into a building with three parts to it, and all united in one great symmetrical structure. The central part of the whole building is life, and on the one hand light, and on the other hand love; and all point upward to God Himself.

I. First, God is life, and if you are His child, you have God's life in you. That proposition needs scarcely more than to be stated to be apprehended and understood. What is life? Life is a great mystery. Nobody can define it, but we know the signs of life, and they are mostly two. First, *vitality;* second, *energy.* How do you know a living babe from a dead corpse? In the first place, there is the spirit of life in it. It breathes, it sees, it hears, it feels; it has senses; it has a measure of intelligence. And then there is energy: action, motion, ability to move the eyes, and the hands, and the feet; and by and by ability to walk, and talk, and exercise all the organs of the body, and faculties of mind. So are you to know a living child of God. He will have vitality and energy. He will manifest the spirit of life and the power of action. Such is the argument of the apostle. He says, "Hereby know we that He abideth in us, *by His Spirit,* which He has given us." The word "spirit," means breath, or wind, which is an expressive symbol of the Spirit. We know the child of God, because he

breathes in God. The spirit of life is in him; and as the apostle says again, "God's seed remaineth in him." God has begotten him as a child, and his vital power is in him, and makes him an acting disciple, enables him to do, to confess, to possess Jesus Christ as a Saviour.

You know a dead from a living body as I have said, because in the latter there is sight, hearing, feeling. How beautifully the apostle refers to this in the child of God. He says in the opening verse, for instance, "That which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon," or as the original reads, "that which we have *glanced at* with our eyes, that which we have *gazed upon.*" If you go along the streets looking for a certain name on a sign above the shops, you just glance at them all until you see a sign which has on it the very name you are looking for, and then you stop and *gaze at* that attentively, until you are satisfied that is the very name, with the very initials and spelling which you have sought. "That which we have *glanced at.*" But we were not satisfied with a glance at Jesus. We stopped and *gazed* at Him until our hearts and minds were filled with His image, and we never forgot that image afterward. There is the spiritual eye, that not only sees, but gazes.

John also says, "He that is of God *heareth*

us." That is to say, if we speak in the name of God, the true child of God turns attentive ear, and stops to hear what we have to say. There is the hearing ear. Then he says in the fifth chapter, "He that hath the Son hath life." He that has the possession of the Son of God, has life, his hands have power to lay hold of, and to hold fast to that which they lay hold upon.

The sinner has no eye to see Jesus, no ear to hearken to Jesus, no hand to take hold of and hold fast to Jesus. He may get a glance at Him, but he passes by even His cross in indifference. He does not stop to gaze. The words of the preacher may catch his ear, but he does not stop to listen. And the Christ of God may be within his grasp, but he does not even reach out his hand to lay hold upon the salvation, offered to faith. And hence the Bible calls the impenitent sinner "*dead in trespasses and sins*," because his eye does not respond to the sight of Jesus, or his ear to the hearing of the words of Jesus, or his sensibilities, his reason, his conscience, to the voice of duty, and the offer of salvation! The Lord says, "If you are a living child you will show it by the fact that your eyes are taken up with gazing on Jesus, and your ears with the words that He speaks, and your grasp with the taking hold of the Saviour of sinners."

Life not only shows itself by this vitality, but also by *energy*. What is life but power in action? A living being that has no power to move an eye, a finger, a foot, is paralyzed. If there is life at all, it is life without action; life scarce distinguishable from death. It is life encased in death, and death ensues. Paralysis of feeling and motion is a sign of approaching dissolution.

This epistle teaches us that a child of God has power to *do*. He does righteousness. "Everyone that doeth righteousness is born of Him;" he is an acting disciple, and has power to do, not evil, but good—not unrighteousness, but righteousness. There is the life in action, the power to walk with God, to work for God, to confess Christ and to witness for Him, the power to live unto God, to exert one's self in holy works of love and mercy.

God is a God of light. If you are a child of God, you will be a child of light. Light in this epistle means knowledge, and is the opposite of darkness, which here means ignorance, alienation from God, separation from the true light that comes into the world in Jesus.

The peculiarity of light is that it *reveals*. Paul says, "Whatsoever doth make manifest is light." If there were no light in this house, we could see nothing. If there were absolute dark-

ness, you could not see me, nor I you, nor could we see the interior of this building. Nothing would be visible. But the moment you let sunshine into the building, everything becomes manifest.

How do you know that you are a child of light? Some things become manifest to you that were not manifest before. First, you come to *know yourself*. If you are a child of light, the light lights *you*. You see yourself, and somewhat as God sees you.

Some think there is no honest atheism. I believe that there may be perfectly honest atheism; but it does not begin by being honest. Men begin by trying to get God out of the universe because they are uncomfortable in sin.

But one may argue to himself and try to persuade himself that there is no God, until by and by God gives him over to believe the lie, that he may be damned. Hear Paul: "God shall send them strong delusion that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness." When you *have pleasure in unrighteousness*, and try to believe such a lie in order to bolster up yourself in sin, God may give you over to believe what you knew at the beginning was false, but which the withdrawal of His spiritual and providential restraints leaves you afterward to believe.

No man ever saw himself to be a sinner if God did not show him that he was. Hence, Jesus Christ is represented as granting repentance unto life, because he helps the sinner to see himself as God sees him. You may have some thought about yourself, that you are not exactly what you ought to be—that, perhaps, you lost your temper with your wife or children before you left home, or you may have a sense that you did not exactly deal honestly with that man who came into the shop to-day to buy something. But I am talking about the sense of deep guilt—the sense of damning guilt—the sense that I am utterly unclean and defiled in God's sight, and am not fit to dwell with God at all. That is a true conviction of sin. That is contrition. The word "contrition" means ground together and pulverized, as though the man's conscience were beneath him like the nether millstone, and God's law above him like the upper millstone, and between the law of God and his own conscience he was being ground to powder.

No man ever comes to such a sense of sin as that if he is not enlightened by the Holy Ghost. When God sheds light on him then he sees himself. Job was called a perfect man, an upright man, one that feared God and eschewed evil, and he thought himself to be without fault ; and

when his friends came to him to talk about his great calamities and afflictions, and maintained that is was impossible that God should visit a man with such judgments if he was not a sinner, Job attempted to justify himself. He said, "I have not closed my hands against the needs of the poor. I have not shut my ear to the hearing of the complaints of the distressed. I have not been in the sight of God the kind of man you make me out to be." But, after all, when God showed himself to Job and showed Job to himself, then Job repented himself in dust and ashes and prostrated himself before God. It is one thing to measure yourself with another man, or with all other men, and quite another thing to measure yourself by Almighty God and His standard. In the first chapter of this epistle we read: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. If we confess our sin, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Nothing can be plainer than that. If a man says either that he has not sinned, or that he has been justifiable in sin, he is not a child of God. It is making God a liar, and he shows that God's word does not abide in him. It has been said that nothing shows the char-

acter of a man more than his bottom thought about sin, when you get all the rubbish out of the way and get down to the bottom thought. If, for instance, you say, "I love it and I am going to have it," you are not a child of God. That is a sinner wallowing like the washed swine in the mire of his own iniquity. If you say, "I did wrong, but I could not help it; I am not responsible; God is responsible; I am just as He made me," you are not a child of God. You are charging the responsibility of your sin on One who cannot be tempted with evil and never tempts any man to do a wrong thing. And so if you say of sin, "It is nothing," and treat it as without moral guilt. But if you come to the point where you say, "Would to God I never had done anything that offended Him; God may forgive me for my sin, but I never can forgive myself for sinning against God;" when you come to see sin as a hateful thing, and hate it because it is sin, and not because it brings punishment, not because you have been detected in your sin, not because you are liable to be brought up before a court, but because you see it to be sin, and hate it as sin; when you heartily wish that you never had sinned, and would cut off your right hand if you could deliver yourself from the guilt of having sinned—then, my friend, God has begun to deal

with you, and He sheds His light on your soul, and you are alive, and, instead of being discouraged, then is the time to thank God that you have seen yourself somewhat as God sees you.

If you have light on yourself, you will have light on God. As surely as God sheds His light on you, He will reveal also Himself. When the sun shines down on you, it also attracts your glance toward itself. So the light that reveals you reveals its source, and you will read God just as you read yourself, in the light of this new revelation.

Did you ever have a wrong thought of God which afterward was made right? Did you ever find yourself thinking of God as you had not thought of Him before? That prodigal son fretted because he was under the roof of his father, because his father had control and authority over him. The oversight of his father was irksome, and he wanted to get away where he could do as he pleased. So he went off into that far-off land, and wasted his substance in riotious living, and got down to the deepest want. Then he came to himself, and began to see his father and his father's house, and his father's authority, and his father's rule, and his father's love in a different light. And he took those steps back to his father, out of all degra-

dation and wretchedness, because he thought of his father as he had not thought of him before. That is what brings a sinner to God. God shows the sinner himself. He is in the foreign land, in an awful famine, in rags and wretchedness and misery, and then God shows to him Himself—what a gracious Father He is!—and makes him sorry to the depths of his being that he has not loved that Father, has not gone in the way of his Father, has not been patient under his Father's rule and even correction; and, coming to himself—that is, seeing himself—he comes to his Father because he sees his Father as he never did before.

If you are a child of God, you will see yourself as a sinner, and you will see your Father as your Father, and Jesus Christ as your Saviour; and you will be sorry at the bottom of your heart that you ever gave your Father a distressing or anxious thought about you, or that you ever passed your Saviour by without giving him all the life, power, energy, activity, obedience, and affection of which you are capable.

A word now with regard to love. If you are a child of God, you will be a child of love; you will have the love of God in your heart. What kind of love is that? Three words express this love: it is expansive; it is expulsive; it is explosive.

This love of God is expansive, for once it has got into the heart it makes the heart bigger. All our human love is selfish. The love a husband bears his wife, the love a wife bears to her husband, and the love that parents bear their children has, at least, a large mixture of the self element. We love our families because they make us delightful homes, and because we find our happiness in these homes, and the conditions of prosperity and profit. This is not wrong, but it is not the highest kind of love. The highest kind of love is the love that God exercised toward us when we were enemies; the love that Jesus showed when, on the cross, He prayed for those who drove nails through His hands and feet, and who passed by the cross and wagged their heads and mocked and derided, and said, "He saved others; let Him save Himself and come down from the cross." Then the Saviour prayed, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." This is the kind of love that God had to us; not the love of complacency that is drawn out by those whom we find amiable and beautiful in character and life, but the love that goes out to sinners in their degradation, destitution and misery. We learned this love only by learning the love of God.

Love is not only thus expansive, but it is also

expulsive, for it drives out all that is unlovable; and it is explosive, for it demands vent in benevolent action. The apostle says, "By this we know that we are the children of God—not only when we love God, but when we love the brethren." The argument of the apostle is, "If any man love not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" Look at the argument. When the Bible says that every disciple should love his fellow-disciple, it does not mean that we should love without discrimination all those that belong to the same church or body of believers. That is a very wrong conception, though it is often entertained. God never asks you to love that which is unlovely for the sake of its unloveliness. You cannot love, for instance, a hateful disposition. And you cannot love a hateful man because of his hatefulness. It would be very strange for God to demand that we should love that which is not to be loved. That would be contradicting the laws of our being. As well say that we should call white, black, or light, darkness, as that we should regard and treat as lovely that which is unlovely. God would have you love a fellow-disciple, but not for the sake of that which is unlovely in him, but for what is Godlike; and therefore the apostle says, "If any man

love not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" You claim to love God. Well, then, do you love all that is Godlike in God's people? Here is a disciple, for instance, that may have faults, as all of us have, but nevertheless he is a prayerful man, an upright man, an honest man, a Godly man. He loves souls; he bears on his heart the interests of Christ's kingdom. Now, if you do not love *what in that man is like God, then you do not love God*, for if you do not love whatever measure of Godlikeness you see exhibited in a fellow-creature, how can you love God whom you have never seen? The only way that you know absolutely that you love God is that you respond to the measure of God's image which you see in God's dear people. That is what the apostle means. A brother of Jesus Christ bears Christ's image, though that image may not be perfected, and may even be marred by many faults and failings; but if I cannot look past faults and failings, and recognize the measure of the image of my Master, and respond to the measure of that image, then I do not love God.

That is a severe test of our Godlikeness. We cannot expect perfection in any child of God below, and if we expect it we shall not find it; but we must learn to look past the imperfections, the faults, the follies, and even the lapses from

duty, in God's children, and our hearts must be drawn to the image of God as far as that image is manifested in others. That is brotherly love, and that is the sign of our Godlikeness.

There is also a larger love than this—a love to those that are not at all lovely, and have not the image of God in them, and that do not manifest attractive virtues and traits—people down in the slums, profane, blasphemous, intemperate, licentious, everything that is bad. No doubt there is something in them that might be attractive, were we intimately enough acquainted with them to discover where that attractive quality lies. Are we to love such people? Yes, we are. Are we to love them because they are drunkards, and licentious, and profane, and blasphemers? Of course not. What are we to love them for? For the sake of developing Godlikeness in them. We are to look at them, not as to what they are, but as to what they may be by the grace of God. Paul said that he was a pattern or type of all future believers. A type is something used in printing to make images like to itself. A type reproduces indefinitely like impressions on paper or any yielding substance. Paul says, "I am a pattern so that other people should take comfort and encouragement by me. I was a persecutor, a blasphemer, profane, injurious. I went to

drag men and women out of the synagogue and put them into prisons, and I stood by and consented even to the death of Stephen, the first martyr. Now, take encouragement from me. If the grace of God reached me, it can reach you. I am a pattern, therefore, to all sinners in future periods of human history that God can reach a man that is repulsive and unattractive, and hateful to disciples, and who is doing all he can to destroy their lives and break up their peace. I was converted partly to encourage you with regard to other sinners."

When the sun looks down on the earth it sees a pond covered with green slime, which breathes malaria and breeds venom. It is a pestilence in the midst of the land. And yet the sun will shine down softly and gently upon that pond, and there comes the white water lily with its delicate fragrance. The sun looks down on the sterile sands where you think nothing would grow, and, lo and behold, up shoots the lupinus, with delicate and many-colored flowers. Or the sun looks down on some mass of filth and slime outside of our great cities. As Ruskin has said, there are brickdust, soot, clay, and sand mingled. But what wonders the sun can do if you let the sun simply shine. That sand may be wrought into new crystalline shapes, and become the opal. By and by the clay takes on

new crystalline conditions, and you will have the sapphire. The soot will be transformed and crystallized, and out of the carbon may be formed the diamond. That filthy water will give up its vapors to the skies, and the frost will send it down again in exquisitely beautiful snowflakes and ice crystals. And somewhat as the sun does with this earth's polluted and barren districts, God's infinite love does with poor sinners. Out of the filth and the slum of their licentiousness and sin he develops the most fragrant and beautiful flowers like unto paradise.

Now, you are to love poor sinners for what God's grace can do for them ; and you do not know but that the abandoned man or the outcast woman that you lift up out of the gutter and rescue out of the clutch of vile sins may yet be a saint that shall get nearer to God than nine-tenths of those disciples that pass them by in neglect.

I have spoken of God's life, and of your being a child of God, and having that life in the spirit and power of life. I have spoken of God being light, and of your having the light in the revelation of yourself, and the revelation of the truth and of God. And I have spoken of your having the love of God, of its showing itself in love to God Himself, and then in love to your brethren who bear His image, and then in love

to a poor dying world, even the most degraded or destitute human beings, in the hope and faith that grace can do for them what it has done for you.

But love always implies hate. A magnetic needle has two poles, and as one pole repels the other pole attracts; nay, at the same pole you find both attraction and repulsion. Our natures, and even God's nature, are so constituted, that where there is love there is hate. You cannot have a God of love without a God of wrath, though some people would construct a God and leave out all holy anger. In a true disciple love and hate are found side by side. By as much as he loves, he hates, and with the same energy he loves and hates. If he loves holiness he hates sin. If he loves goodness he hates unrighteousness. If he loves God he hates the devil. Such a hate is a sign of love, and one of the strongest signs of love. Hence the Apostle John in this epistle says, "Love not the world, neither the things which are in the world. For if a man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him; for all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever." I put this as the closing appeal, because I am persuaded that we, Chris-

tian people, are just now under one of the worst temptations that ever beset the church. It is a peril as old as the days of the Apostle John. Throughout this epistle, like James and Peter and Paul, he holds up the world as the *irreconcilable foe of godliness.* He says, in fact, that the world and the Church are such antagonistic foes as never to be reconciled, and that the greatest danger of the Church is to be found not in the world's open hostility, but in the world's proffer of friendship. Now we have come to the time in Church history when the world no longer openly opposes, but rather courts the Church. The world would like to be esteemed as quite churchly, not losing its worldliness by conformity to religion, but just decently churchly and formally religious. Nay, the world is getting into the Church, and the Church is getting into the world, or has already got there, until it is almost impossible to tell where the world ends and the Church begins. The ages of persecution were far safer than these when there is no persecution. Persecution acted as a sieve, that let the grain fall through on God's floor, while it sifted out the chaff for the wind to carry away; but now there is no such sifting process, and the chaff and the wheat lie together on the garner floors of God, and it is almost impossible to separate them.

Let us judge ourselves lest we be judged. The apostle says "If you love the world you do not love God." "If any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him." The world hates God. No matter what complexion it wears, how deceitfully it smiles, how it seems even to court the Church of God and the things of religion, whatever may be the appearance, the world always hates, does hate, and always will hate God. The world crucified our Saviour, and loves Him no better in the nineteenth century than it did in the first. And if Christ came on earth to-day, the world would persecute Him and crucify Him, just as it once did, if it had the power.

Let us not deceive ourselves. The objects that satisfy the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, the pride of life, do not belong to God. They are hostile to him, and draw in a different direction, and therefore, if you hold to the world you cannot hold to God. If you are living for this world you cannot be living for the world to come. If you are taken up with this life, you cannot be taken up with the life to come. You may have this world if you want it, but you cannot have the other too. You may have the other if you want it, but you cannot have this too. The world passes away, and the objects of its lust, but he that does the

will of God abides forever. As John Wesley used to say, the child of God ought to be too proud to commit sin. So I say, we ought to be too proud to be satisfied with this world. If I were going to live here a thousand years, why should I care for a little wreath of parsley on my brow, that would not last for twenty-four hours? If I am to have any crown, I want a crown that will last. If I am to live a thousand years, do I want a straw hut, which the fire would burn up in three minutes? No, I want a substantial mansion, and a provision for a thousand years. If you are going to live forever in heaven with God, why spend your time over perishing things that are enjoyed but for a day?

Let us deal honestly with ourselves. Have we the life of God in us? Are we doing righteousness? Have we the light of God in us? Have we seen ourselves as sinners, and seen God as our Father and Christ as our Saviour? Have we the love of God in us? Do we love the brethren for the measure of their likeness to God? Do we love sinners, in vice and crime, for Christ's sake? Do we hate this world, that crucified our Lord and that has always drawn Christian disciples away from their allegiance to Him? Do we remember that to-day the great danger of disciples is their conformity to

the world, locking arms with the world, as though they had nothing else to live for? No more call was there for consecration in martyr days than in these; the martyrs that God wants in the nineteenth century are the disciples that *dare to be separate unto Him.* Let man call you a fanatic, sneer at you as a pretender to perfect holiness; an ascetic, that ought to be shut up in a cell. Let them laugh at and scorn you. They hated your Master. Why should they not hate the disciple? God wants a church within a church; within the nominal body of professing Christians, a real body of Christ, joined to him by faith, working with him in love for mankind, dwelling in the light of God as he dwells in the light of God, and parting company with the world as the most dangerous foe the disciple can have.

The Lord help us to live for Him!

THE MOUNTAIN-TOP OF PRAYER.

IX.

THE MOUNTAIN-TOP OF PRAYER.

"Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."—EPHESIANS iii : 20, 21.

THIS is the most glorious of all the revelations concerning prayer to be found in the Epistles of St. Paul.

In order that we may see the connection, let us read the whole of this prayer, beginning at the fourteenth verse : "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man ; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith ; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height ; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth

knowledge, that ye may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."

The Epistle to the Ephesians is the Switzerland of the New Testament. It presents a series of Alpine heights, and as we tread over the pathways of this Epistle we rise from one height to another, and from thence survey the wonders of the grace of God. The subject of the Epistle is the unity of all believers in Christ Jesus, and the subject of this particular prayer of the apostle is, specially, a larger acquaintance with the love and with the power of God, from which he draws his great argument to stimulate saints to fervent and believing supplication. We are standing here on, perhaps, the highest of the peaks of this Epistle; it is the Mont Blanc, soaring up into the highest heaven.

We reach the summit of a mountain by ascending first subordinate heights; we climb to the peak itself by going up the mountain side, and from point to point get increasingly large prospects. How does the apostle lead us up to this mountain peak of prayer? In the first

place, he conducts us to that sublime height, the love of God, and from that he ascends to the power of God. A moment's reflection will show that to understand each of these is necessary, if we are to apprehend what prayer is, and what are the encouragements to the praying soul. Our incentives to prayer must be found both in the Love and in the Power of God ; for love determines His willingness and power determines His ability. If God were simply a God of love, but not a God of power, He would be willing but not able ; if He were a God of power, but not a God of love, He would be able but not willing. And in this latter case, His Omnipotence, so far from being turned to our advantage might become the means of our destruction. But when we have, first of all, a willing God, and then a God of boundless ability, we have the highest assurance possible to a praying soul. And so Paul begins by praying that in accordance with, and by the power of the Holy Spirit shed abroad in our hearts, we may be able with all saints to comprehend the breadth, and length, and depth, and height ; and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge.

Paul is introducing us to the science of the divine mensuration, or the measurement of the dimensions of the attributes of God. He treats the love of God as a cube, having breadth and

length, depth and height. The reason is, that the cube in the Bible is treated as the perfection of form. Every side of a cube is a perfect square, and from every angle it presents the same appearance. Turn it over, and it is still a cube—just as high, deep, and broad as it was before. And so the Holy of Holies—that which represented the dwelling-place of God in the Tabernacle and the Temple—was a perfect cube. By divine direction it was made ten cubits long, ten cubits broad, and ten cubits high ; and if we turn to the Book of the Revelation, and see the Holy Jerusalem of which the Holy of Holies was the type, let down from God out of heaven, we find that the length, and breadth, and height of it were equal : it is still the perfection of symmetry. When Paul leads us to study the love of God, he first of all calls our attention to its breadth. We should be very careful how we misquote Scripture. Believing, as I heartily do, in the inspiration of language, as well as thought, I am very reverent in the commission to memory of the exact words of Holy Scripture. There is a reason why this does not read, as too often it is quoted, "length and breadth," but first of all "*breadth*." For what is the first thing that you and I need to know about the love of God ? It is whether it reaches to ME—is it broad enough to take me

in? And this was the mystery of which Paul speaks in this Epistle to the Ephesians, written especially to a Gentile people—that the Jews did not represent the final election of God, but that that election comprehended all nations and peoples, and tongues, and tribes, and those that were sometimes afar-off, worshippers of the great goddess Diana. Yes, the very people of Ephesus itself, far from the living God, and immersed in all manner of iniquities and idolatries, those that were sometimes afar-off were reached by this broad love of God; a breadth that takes in all humanity. The great multitude that stand round about the throne in the consummation of salvation, shall exemplify the breadth of a love that left not the most hardened and desperate sinner outside of its yearnings and its power.

The first thing is, then, how broad is the love of God? and I say, in God's name, it is broad enough to take anybody in, if he will be taken into its holy embrace. You may have gone away, like the Prodigal, from his father's house; you may have wandered as far as you could get from that Father's house; you may have wasted yourself and your substance in riotous living; you may have come to such an extremity of spiritual famine, as that no man can minister to you, and you can no longer help yourself; but

if, even then, in the depths of your degradation, and your estrangement, you come to yourself, and turn about and come to God, you shall have the robe and the ring, and the shoes and the fatted calf, and the Father's kiss of welcome. So broad is the love of God!

When I have discovered that it is broad enough to reach to me, the next question is, the length of this love; how long has God loved me? "I have loved thee with an everlasting love." There never was a time when God did not love you—before you were born, in the ages of eternity, He loved you; He planned your redemption to meet your sin, and planned the gift of the Holy Ghost to supplement the gift of Jesus Christ that you might be regenerated and sanctified and fully equipped for glory. And as that love never had a beginning, it shall never have an end. It reaches from one eternity to another, and so spans the two eternities.

Then the next question is, how deep is that love? So deep that it went down to hell to pluck me out, that it descended to the depths of my sin and guilt and misery and perdition that it might lay hold upon me. You ask how high it is. Not until you can measure the measureless heights to which it lifts you, exalting you side by side with Jesus Christ and making you a partaker of the divine nature and the divine

glory ; not until you can understand those heights, can you understand the height of the love of God. And so Paul prays that they may be able with all saints to comprehend what is the breadth of a love which reaches to the most destitute, degraded, and depraved ; the length of a love that reaches back to an eternity without beginning and onward to an eternity without end ; a love so deep that it hesitates at no depths when a sinner is there to be rescued ; so high that it ascends to the infinite heights of an infinite glory and carries us with it. Such is the love that encourages us to pray, because we know that we have a loving God, and therefore a God whose heart is full of the willingness of grace.

I suppose that this is the real point of the argument in the fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews when the writer, summing up all that he has to say, concludes : "Let us therefore come boldly upon the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." Notice, it is the "throne of *grace*." There are seven thrones spoken of in the Bible appertaining to God—the throne of power, the throne of judgment, the throne of justice, the throne of righteousness, the throne of glory, the throne of majesty, but we are never bidden to come boldly to the throne of

power, of holiness, of justice, of judgment. Why? Because such a throne would repel us. But we are told to come boldly to the throne of grace, because grace is favor to the undeserving, and I need not take cognizance of my own demerit when I come to the throne of grace. Power rebukes my weakness, holiness assaults my sin, justice reminds me of my condemnation, judgment threatens me with perdition; but grace assures me of salvation, and so I come boldly to the throne of grace where my loving, sympathetic Saviour is my intercessor and my friend.

Now, having ascended to the height of love, Paul carries us onward to the height of power. And here notice that we are dealing with picked and packed words: "Now unto him that is able do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." I challenge any student of the Bible to find, even in the most enthusiastic and glowing descriptions of the power or grace of God, any words that surpass those in emphasis or intensity—"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." The words that are here, thus picked and packed together, remind us of the old story of the ancients about the Titans. When they sought to scale the heavens we are told that they piled mountain upon mountain, Ossa upon Pel-

ion, Olympus upon Ossa. And so here the Apostle Paul is taking words that have in themselves the size and the weight of mountains, and is piling one upon the other in the vain attempt to express omnipotence.

Some illustrations strike the eye as well as the ear, and we are thus enabled to reach the mind through those two channels at once. Suppose here is a tumbler filled with water, so full that it probably would accommodate scarcely another drop. Now, the Greeks would have called that by the word (περισσος) that means "fullness." Suppose I continue to pour into this tumbler and it overflows: that would call for another expression, "over-fullness" (ἐπὶ περισσου). Suppose that I continue to pour until the overflow exhausts the pitcher and drenches the floor, the Greek would call that "an excess beyond over-fullness," ὑπερ ἐπὶ περισσου. That is exactly the expression that is used here. The first word means an excess, the prefix means an excess of an excess, and the whole expression means an excess of an excess of an excess. That is what Paul says about prayer: "Now unto him that is able to do excessively and superexcessively and super-superexcessively,"—that is the God you have to deal with. He can not only fill your little measure till it overflows, but He can pour in upon the overflow, and

still upon the overflow of the overflow continue to pour in. You perceive that I am laboring to express by the imperfect vehicle of human language what no words can express.

If you examine this passage closely, you will observe that we attain to this height of prayer by a sevenfold ascent. Let me indicate the stages of the ascent. "Able to do"—that is the basis of all, simply a declaration of the general ability of God to answer prayer. "What we *ask*"—that is the first stage. "*All* that we ask"—that is the second. "What we *think*"—that is the third. "*All* that we think"—that is the fourth. "*Above* all that we ask or think"—that is the fifth. "*Abundantly* above all that we ask or think"—that is the sixth. "*Exceeding* abundantly above all that we ask or think"—that is the seventh. It is a marvelous revelation concerning prayer, and the wonder is that any disciple of Jesus Christ can take up such a passage of Scripture as that and ever be prayerless, or lose faith or confidence in prayer, or leave so mighty a power unused in his own personal life.

But notice the *basis* on which all the promises to prayerful souls rest. Let us not pass by that little phrase of so much significance, "according to the power that worketh in us." Notwithstanding the boundless love of God, notwithstanding the boundless power of God, there

is absolutely no power in prayer unless there is first, working in the suppliant, that mighty power of God. In the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans we are told "The Spirit helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered. And He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." Then we are told in the latter part of the same chapter that Jesus Christ "also maketh intercession for us."

The power that worketh in us is the power of union with the Spirit of God and with the Son of God, and upon that double union with those two persons of the Trinity depends all our ability to avail ourself either of the love or of the might of God. This wonderful thought it is essential that we should understand, if we grasp the philosophy of prayer. You have often asked yourselves, "Why do I need two intercessors—one the Holy Ghost, and the other the Son of God? My friend, Dr. Gordon, of Boston, has said that it reminds him of a firm of lawyers, where one partner never leaves the office, but collects and classifies and arranges documents and evidence and does the office work. The other goes into the courts to plead,

to appear before juries and judges and represent the case. The Holy Ghost corresponds to the lawyer that keeps in his office, and the blessed Son of God corresponds to the lawyer that goes to the court and stands in the presence of the judge to represent the case. Two intercessors: the Holy Spirit in the heart with groanings which cannot be uttered, breathing out to God the desires of the saints. Have you never yourself, in your most prayerful moments, found that there were many things that you could not utter: you could only groan and sigh? But you remembered with thankfulness that:

> "Prayer is the burden of a sigh,
> The falling of a tear,
> The upward glancing of an eye,
> When none but God is near."

Have you never been compelled to say:

> "My God will pity my complaints,
> And heal my broken bones,
> He takes the meaning of His saints,
> The language of their groans."

When your prayers surpass the power of human language to express, when they are groans and sighs after God that defy utterance, that is the very groaning of the Holy Ghost within you in unutterable longings after God.

Such is the office of the Intercessor within. Now as to the office of the Intercessor on high. He takes these prayers that tremble up from the heart, in which the Holy Ghost speaks, but which are corrupted nevertheless with our selfishness and sordidness and carnality, and He purifies them from all these defects and imperfections, and then presents them before the throne of God as perfect prayer. And so we read in this Epistle to the Ephesians, in the second chapter, "through Him" (that is Christ) "we have access by one Spirit unto the Father." That is the only verse in the New Testament where we have Father, Son, and Holy Ghost represented in connection with prayer. Through Christ, by the Spirit, unto the Father.

The intercession of Jesus Christ I am satisfied is very much misunderstood. We imagine our Lord as standing before the throne of God and praying for His people. It is true that He does pray for them, but not as we sometimes think. His very *presence* at the throne of God is His everlasting plea. The very fact that He stands there with pierced hands and feet and side, your Representative, is the assurance that you are heard and shall be answered. There is a beautiful story in Greek history: Eschylus, a Greek tragedian, it is said, had committed some offense which made him amen-

able to a severe punishment—in fact, if I remember rightly, he was charged with treason against the State. He came before his judges as they sat in a semi-circular row, and the case was put before them. They were about to say "Condemn!" with one voice, when the door opened, and in came a brother of Eschylus, who on the battlefield for his country had lost an arm. He saw what the position of affairs was, and the danger in which his brother stood, and he stepped before the judges and without a word raised the stump of the arm that he had sacrificed for his country. The judges looked on Eschylus and then looked at his brother, and with one voice they cried, "Acquit, acquit!"

"Five bleeding wounds He bears,
Received on Calvary,
They pour effectual prayers,
They strongly plead for me.
'Forgive him! Oh, forgive!' they cry.
'Nor let that ransomed sinner die.'"

What is the assurance that your prayers shall be answered? It is that the power that works in you by the Holy Ghost and in your union with Jesus Christ enables you to claim the love there is in God and the power there is in God for the fulfillment of His promise to you as a believing and penitent soul. Have you ever noticed the force of that expression which occurs in the

New Testament—praying "in Jesus' name?" Turn to the Gospel according to John. The most wonderful words that our Lord has ever spoken on the subject of prayer are in the sixteenth chapter of the Gospel, beginning with the twenty-third verse: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name He will give it you." Now notice this: "*Hitherto* have ye asked nothing in My name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full. At that day ye shall ask in My name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: for the Father Himself loveth you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came out from God." Observe that our Lord three times here bids the disciples pray *in His name*, and, what is more remarkable, He says, "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name." Not only had no Old Testament saints prayed in the name of Jesus, but not even these disciples who accompanied Him for three years had yet prayed in His name, and this was therefore a new revelation on the subject of prayer. If you will compare the Gospel narratives, you will find that the first great lesson He taught was simply to *ask* (Matthew vii: 7). Then in the eleventh chapter of Mark, He says, "Ask *believing*." And now we come to something grander than asking or

even asking in faith—asking *in the name of Jesus.* The name of Jesus represents Himself, as my name represents me and your name represents you. To ask in the name of Jesus is not simply to say "For His sake," but it is to ask in the power of my union with Him as my Redeemer; it is to ask in His stead; it is to ask because I belong to Him and He belongs to me; and this union is my authority in the request.

We read in the eighth chapter of the Book of Esther, how on a certain occasion Ahasuerus took his signet-ring from his finger and put it on Esther's, and said to Mordecai and Esther: "Write as it liketh you, in the king's name, and seal it with the king's ring: for the writing which is written in the king's name, and sealed with the king's ring, may no man reverse." To write in the king's name was the same as if he had written it himself: it was to use the authority and power of the Oriental despot to carry out the will of one who might, like Mordecai, be simply a subject. And so our Blessed Lord gives you, as it were, a blank sheet of paper, and says: "Write as it liketh you, in My name; and seal it with My signet-ring, for what you write in My name and seal with My signet-ring no man, no angel, can reverse." When I was in Belfast, in 1890, I desired to

visit the celebrated works of Marcus Ward & Son. I could not obtain access to those works in my own name, for strangers are not allowed to go through that extensive establishment, but a friend of mine, who was at the same time my host, said, "If you take my card and *use my name*, I think you will have access to all parts of the works." I simply went down and presented the card of my friend and made my application in his name, and the same courtesies were shown to me as would have been shown to him. Just before the dear pastor, Mr. Spurgeon, left for Mentone, he said: "So much sympathy and kindness have been shown me in this city and in Great Britain that I imagine that if you want to get entrance to any place and will use my name, courtesy will be shown you." Let me put this truth very boldly, but I trust very reverently. When I ask a favor in another's name it is not I that am the suppliant, but the man whose name I use. I simply present the request which he makes through me. And reverently let me say, when, in the name of Jesus, I present my request to the Father, *not I but Jesus Christ is the suppliant.* And therefore I have the assurance that I shall be heard.

Apply this to your condition. In the first place, you see why prayer is not answered. If the fellowship of the Holy Ghost is interrupted

by your sins, by your continuance in inconsistencies, and violation of the conditions of your own Christian life, if you live afar from God in a comparatively indifferent wandering on the border line between duty and inclination, you hinder the work of the Holy Ghost in praying within you. If in any way you impair your fellowship with the Blessed Son of God, you hinder the intercession of the Son of God, for you at the throne of grace. And so the power of God must work in you, and work in you mightily, by your cultivation of fellowship with the Spirit within and your cultivation of union with the Son of God at the throne, if your prayers are to be attended with power.

And the second thought is, what a lost motor the Church of God has given up when she lost the apostolic power of supplication! In this Church there has been for months past one of the sublimest spectacles that has ever created joy in heaven, or in the midst of men made both the ears of him that heareth to tingle. On the second Sabbath of last May your beloved pastor was suddenly attacked with disease. After what appeared to be a partial recovery, he suffered a relapse, went down to the gates of death, was pronounced by competent physicians incurable by human instrumentality, and for twenty-one weeks daily prayer was offered for

him in this place at early morning and evening. In those prayer-meetings the whole Church of God seemed to be represented. Baptists of all grades of theological opinion, Primitive Methodists, Wesleyan Methodists, Episcopal Methodists, Congregationalists, Independents, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, all united in hearty supplication to the living God to spare a life that they accounted of more value than the precious gold of Ophir, the onyx, or the sapphire. During this time more than 7000 messages of condolence and sympathy, resolutions from ecclesiastical bodies and all kinds of meetings and assemblies, have poured in upon the devoted head of this your beloved pastor. Fifty telegrams a day came to Westwood inquiring about his health, until it became impossible for telegraphic clerks, or private secretaries to open, read, and answer them. And what astonished Mr. Spurgeon beyond measure was that not only from rectors and curates, and deans and deacons and archdeacons and canons and bishops and archbishops there came visits of sympathy and inquiries of affection, but that even Jewish Rabbis waited upon him and assured him that all Israel was praying for his recovery. I say with pathos and deep persuasion that since the time the disciples waited ten days before God in continuous prayer for Pentecost, or prayer

was made without ceasing of the Church of God for Peter when in prison, there has been no spectacle so sublime presented by the Church of God during all these eighteen centuries! What a tribute to him who for forty years has been a standing protest against all formalism, all hypocrisy, all scepticism and all secularism, and who has presented the living Christ as an ever-present Saviour! And now, in the name of God, I challenge this great Church of Jesus Christ to a spectacle more sublime than that which has greeted the eyes of angels and of men. I want to challenge you—and this is the solemn conclusion of this solemn appeal—to as unceasing and united prayer for a new coming of the Holy Ghost on the Church and on the world. If this spectacle was sublime of all disciples of every name uniting for the rescue of one beloved pastor from the jaws of death, how think you the heavenly host would thrill with delight, and even the heart of our Saviour itself, if disciples of Jesus Christ of every name could be found represented in morning and evening meetings for prayer, during six months to come, in this consecrated place in an importunate, believing, and anointed supplication that the greatest manifestation of the Holy Ghost since the days of Pentecost might come upon the Church of God in this apostate age; and that

the world might soon hear the tidings of the gospel, that they might flash like electric lights from pole to pole, till every creature should have learned the message of salvation; and that gospel having been preached as a witness to all nations, the end might come when the King in His glory shall once more descend to take His throne and wield His scepter over a regenerate world!

THE PERFECT PEACE.

X.

THE PERFECT PEACE.

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee. Trust ye in the Lord forever; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." The marginal reading is, "for in the Lord Jehovah is the Rock of Ages."

—ISAIAH xxvi, 3, 4.

"Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."—PHILIPPIANS iv, 6, 7.

PAUL says of the love of God, in the Epistle to the Ephesians, that "It passeth knowledge." Here he says of the peace of God, that it "passeth understanding." It may seem very strange that the apostle should bid us undertake to know a love which passes knowledge, and to seek after a peace which passes understanding. And yet there is no contradiction in these terms. When they were laying the Atlantic cable, they came to some places they were unable to sound. They would let down their fathoming line a

thousand fathoms, a second thousand, a third, a fourth, a fifth, and even a sixth thousand fathoms, and the lead would still swing clear, and whenever in the ocean such a place is found we call it unfathomable ; that is, we express our knowledge of those depths, by saying that we do not know. And so we express our highest knowledge of the love of God, by saying that it passes full comprehension ; and so we express our estimate of the peace of God, by saying that it passeth all understanding.

Who among you does not need peace ? First, look at the word " peace." It is not joy. It is a greater word than joy. Joy is fitful, transient. Joy sometimes alternates with deep impression, just as the crest of the wave alternates with the trough of the sea. Peace is an eternal and unchangeable calm. The highest expression for the bliss of God is the one here used, " the peace of God." And peace is so characteristic of God, that in the same passage from the Epistle to the Philippians, He is called " the God of peace " as He is elsewhere called " the God of truth." There is what is called " the cushion of the sea." Down beneath the surface that is agitated with storms, and driven about with winds, there is a part of the sea that is never stirred. When we dredge the bottom and bring up the remains of animal and vegetable

life, we find that they give evidence of not having been disturbed in the least for hundreds and thousands of years. The peace of God is that eternal calm which, like the cushion of the sea, lies far too deep down to be reached by any external trouble and disturbance, and he who enters into the peace of God, and has the peace of God enter into him, becomes partaker of that undisturbed and undisturbable calm.

There is a difference between peace *with* God and the peace *of* God. In the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, the apostle says "that being justified by faith we have peace with God." That is true with regard to any sinner who has just returned from his iniquities and accepted the Saviour. The moment that he finds the Saviour, he finds peace with God, but that is not the peace of God. Sometimes a disciple waits many years before the experience of the peace of God fills his soul, but the moment that a sinner becomes a trusting, penitent believer, that moment he has peace with God, for peace with God is the peace of reconciled relations, but the peace of God is the peace of conscious, divine indwelling. If a soldier escapes from an enemy by whom he is held in captivity, and seeks to get within the lines of his own army, his own loyal friends and fellow-soldiers, he may cross the line that separates

the pickets of one army from the pickets of the other, and not be aware of it. He may cross it in the night. And so a man may cross the line that separates between the friends and the enemies of God, and may not know it. He may suppose that there is something more that God demands than that which he has already yielded in penitence and faith, and some error of early education may lead him to expect some sign of God's approval, that the Scriptures do not justify. And so many a sinner has turned to Jesus, and come on the ground of peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, who has not, at the time, known that he was a reconciled son of God, so subtile are the snares that Satan puts round us to rob us of conscious peace.

This perfect peace of God, first of all, surrounds and invests the whole man. The word translated "keep," in Isaiah, and the word translated "keep" in the Epistle to the Philippians, both mean to keep as by a garrison, that is, to surround as with a guard: and this reminds us of what is said in the Psalms, that "the angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them." The idea is that God sent His angels to walk like sentries, as it were, about a believing soul, and ward off the enemies of his peace and of his holy happiness and bliss in God. Notice that

the whole man is thus kept. The apostle says, "The peace of God shall keep your hearts and minds." That includes the whole man. If the heart represents the loving power, and the mind represents the thinking power, between the two is comprehended all that is meant by heart and mind, and soul and strength.

What is the unrest of the mind? The unrest of the mind is unsettled conviction. If I do know the truth, or do not believe it, it is impossible for me to have any real rest in my mind. This is an age of doubt, an age when it is fashionable to doubt, an age when men and women are questioning all the great verities and certainties of the Word of God, and the unseen world. You may pride yourself on your skepticism, you may think well of yourself because you doubt what humble-minded believers accept without a question; but I tell you solemnly, here and now, that your life will be a restless and unhappy life, that can never know the peace of God, so long and so far as you do not believe. Paul says to the Ephesian Christians, "That ye henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lay in wait to deceive." He uses here two figures to express the condition of a mind that has not anchored

itself to any religious certainties. When the wind blows strongly, all little objects that have not much weight in themselves are taken up and tossed to and fro. A feather or a piece of paper will be borne on the wings of the wind, and even if it settles for a moment on a twig or stone, it is borne away again wherever the wind will. So it is with people who have no certain convictions. They come into the presence of believers and, for the moment, the atmosphere of faith in which they find themselves inclines them to believe; but the moment after they may come into the company of unbelievers, and the atmosphere of unbelief inclines them again to deny the truth that they were on the point of accepting, and so they vacillate. They reflect whatever individual sentiments they happen to meet. One day they believe that there is a God, and the next day they doubt it. One day they believe that the Bible is the Word of God, and the next day they deny it. One day they are inclined to think that Christ is God's Son and man's Saviour, and the other day they are inclined to think that he is a mere myth, or an imposter, or a misguided man. How can there be any heavenly rest in the soul where there is not heavenly belief in the soul? Paul could say, "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a build-

ing of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Paul could say, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." Paul could say, "I know that all things work together for good to them that love God;" and the power to say, "I know," on great religious questions is the power that brings the peace of God to the human mind, and no mind ever knew peace unless there was this rest of conviction in God.

Paul uses another figure to express the unrest of the mind that has no settled conviction. He says, "By the sleight of men and cunning craftiness whereby they lay in wait to deceive." This language refers to the tricks of a magician, legerdemain, skill or sleight of hand. The trickster holds up his silk handkerchief, and makes you believe, for a moment, that behind that handkerchief he accomplishes a certain thing that he does not accomplish. He makes your eyes the fools of your other senses, and you are almost persuaded that a thing is true that is a trick, an imposition. And so, by the sophistries of false argument, men, through sleight of mind, as other men through sleight of hand, make you believe that they prove what they do not prove and cannot prove—that there is no God, that the Bible is a fraud, that there

was no such person as Jesus Christ, or that his resurrection was a myth and an imposture, and that all belief in Jesus Christ is but, after all, misguided fanaticism. They pretend to prove what cannot be proven, and their forms of logic are the silk handkerchief behind which they perform those tricks of intellectual legerdemain. I bless God that there are some people in the world who can defy any logic to prove to them that there is no God, that there is no inspiring book, no divine Saviour, no heavenly life beyond this world. It is as possible to get to certainty on religious things as it is to certainty on other things. Perhaps you say, "How am I going to experiment on the unseen world?" I answer that you can experiment on the unseen world just as truly as you can experiment on the world that now is, and that is material and sensible. God says, "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good." Now the taste is one of our senses. It is the simplest, and the earliest to be brought into exercise; and yet we never think of distrusting our sense of taste, and to that sense God appeals as a figure to express experimenting on him. You may go into the prayer room and handle God. You may send up your prayers to the throne of grace, and get the answers down. You may look into the Bible and find the testimonies of Jesus Christ within

the pages of the very Scriptures themselves. You may open your heart to the incoming of the Holy Ghost, and in that have the highest demonstration of the reality of the unseen Spirit and the unseen world. If you will have your senses exercised to discern both good and evil, you will, by the power of a holy experiment, demonstrate to yourself the reality and verity of spiritual things.

What is the unrest of the heart? It is the unrest of unsatisfied love and longing. When Noah opened the windows of the ark he sent out first the raven, which wandered to and fro over the face of the earth, and, finding no rest, still continued to wander. But when he sent out the dove, and the dove could find no rest for the sole of her foot, she came back to Noah into the ark. Those two birds, the raven and the dove, represent human souls in all history. Unbelieving souls are restless without God, but they will not fly to his bosom. Believing souls, restless without God, can realize what Augustine's motto means, "Thou, O God, hast made us for Thee, and our heart is restless till it rests in Thee: and when they find no place on which to rest, they fly to God, and find in Him their refuge and their heaven. You might just as well try to find a resting place for the human eye outside of the socket provided for it, a

resting place for the joint of your upper arm aside from the socket of the bone made to accommodate it, just as well attempt to find a resting place for the sole of your foot without a solid substance on which to stand, as to attempt to find a resting place for the heart without God. God never meant that we should find in this world any permanent rest for our hearts, even in the love of human beings. However pure a wife or a husband may be, however beautiful and affectionate a child may be, God never meant that our hearts should rest in marital, paternal, or filial love. Why? Because the objects of our love may be torn from our embrace without a moment's notice. The wife that you hold in your arms to-day and cherish with husbandly affection, who is all to you that any human being could be, you may lay in the earth before another Lord's day; and the little child whose hand is so omnipotent as it caresses your face and twines about your neck may lie in the coffin cold and dead before another day shall pass. God never meant that you should find the anchorage for your heart on anything that is any less eternal and unchangeable than Himself.

The Book of Ecclesiastes records an experiment conducted by a king with royal resources at his hand. God permitted him to have im-

mense wealth and all the facilities for conducting the experiment; and the king tells us that he undertook to find out what was that good for the sons of men, which they should enjoy under heaven all the days of their life. He tried wisdom and folly, he tried mirth and wine, he tried architecture and agriculture, he tried the mechanic arts and the fine arts. He built him great works. He gathered him men singers and women singers and instruments of all sorts. He planted immense gardens and orchards and vineyards, and great pools were constructed by him; and his verdict was "All is vanity and vexation of spirit, and there is no profit under the sun." He turned away from all these things a disappointed man. Not only did he say, "It is all vanity"—that is, all emptiness—but "it is all vexation of spirit"—positive vexation as well as emptiness. But if you pass along from Ecclesiastes to Solomon's Song, you will find that he who, in the Book of Ecclesiastes, tried this experiment and found the world too small to fill man's soul, in the Book of Solomon's Song finds the soul too small to contain God. In Ecclesiastes he finds that man is a half hinge and that God is the other half, that this world is half a sphere and eternity is the other half, and that as you can never have a complete hinge if you do not put both parts together,

or a complete sphere if you do not put both hemispheres together, so you cannot get the whole man, you cannot get the whole bliss, you cannot get the whole satisfaction, if you do not join this world and the other world, if you do not link man to God. And so he gives us his conclusion: "Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the *whole man*."

What is the unrest of the will? It is the unrest of unsettled resolution. It is to be vacillating in purpose, one day determined to be a meek, holy, upright man, the next day forsaking that determination and plunging anew into sin; one day resolved to give up all for God, and the next day compromising between God and Mammon; one day to be strong in my resolution toward the right, and the next day to find, with Samson, that my resolves snap like the green withes and new ropes, in the crisis of a mighty temptation. There can be no such thing as the peace of God when there is not a fixed resolve, when you cannot say with David: "O God, my heart is fixed, my heart is fixed, trusting in Thee." Over in Paris, in the palace of Versailles, they have the "Gallery of Battles." It is lined with pictures that represent great battles in which the French were victorious; for there is not a single picture in that gallery which represents a French defeat. The "Gallery of

Battles" in the word of God is the Book of Daniel, and it is lined with pictures of conflicts conducted by the children of God against the powers of this world, and there is not a single defeat pictured forth in that gallery of battles, for there was not a defeat to be recorded. The ground and secret of those victories was simply a holy, fixed resolve. That third chapter, where we read about the three holy children, is one of the sublimest portions of the Word of God. Nebuchadnezzar set up that great image on the plain of Dura and commanded all the people of his realm to fall down before it and worship. The three holy children, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, did not yield homage to his idolatrous image, so he caused the furnace to be heated seven times hot, and he brought them before himself and the image and he said, "Now if ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made, well; but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning, fiery furnace; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" Hear the sublime answer of those three holy men: "O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom

we serve is able to deliver us from the burning, fiery furnace, as He will deliver us out of thy hand, O king." But the sublimest part is what follows : "BUT IF NOT,"—if God does not appear for our deliverance, if there is no divine interposition, if we are flung into the fiery furnace and consumed there,—"be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." He could not shake the determination of these holy men by putting them between the image on the one hand and the fiery furnace on the other. And when the decree of Darius went forth that no man should ask any petition of God or man, save of him only, for thirty days, Daniel was found to be still praying to the Lord his God. The enemies of Daniel came and informed the king, and though Daniel knew that the writing was signed and that the den of lions was the alternative to the abandonment of prayer, he went into his chamber, and still prayed to his God, as aforetime. He might have done as a great many Christians do—knelt down with the windows and the doors shut and prayed in silence. But his testimony for God was at stake. Those mean, contemptible spies were underneath the windows even then listening to see if he dared to violate the king's word, but he opened his window, threw open the casement,

and knelt down before the window with his face toward Jerusalem and prayed aloud so that they might hear that he was not afraid of the king's word ; and he went into the den of lions because he would not give up praying to his God.

Why do not you have the peace of God which passeth all understanding? Why do not you that are children of God and disciples of Christ who have been walking as disciples for many years, have the peace of God? Perhaps you are losing all peace of God because you have not a settled resolve for God. There is a border line that lies between the Church and the world. Within that border land or line there lie what we call worldly amusements of which you cannot say, perhaps, that there is anything in them inherently wrong and yet you notice that the world loves them, that the world has put its stamp upon them, that they are the favorite employments and enjoyments of men that have no love of God in their hearts ; and I am sorry to say that in this border land you will find thousands upon thousands of professed disciples habitually walking. They consort with the world, and follow its amusements. They are drawn into the world's pleasures, and so find themselves drawn further and further into the world, until they leave the company of Christ's disciples altogether. There never was

a child of God that had the peace of God that passeth all understanding until he had made the sublime resolve to let that border land alone that lies between the Church and the world. If you want the peace of God, there must be a separation between you and the world. You must leave chosen employments and enjoyments in which worldly men find their satisfaction, and must get nearer the heart of true disciples and nearer to the heart of Jesus Christ. President Edwards, on his birthday, made this solemn resolve, "Resolved that hereafter I will never do anything of which I so much doubt the propriety as that I intend, at the same time afterward to consider whether it be proper or not, except I equally doubt the propriety of not doing it." Whenever you come to make a total surrender of yourself to God; whenever you lay yourself as a burnt sacrifice, a whole offering, on God's altar; whenever, henceforth you cut off all indulgences that might tend to defile you with worldliness and persuade the world that you hanker after such joys because you have no taste of celestial joys; when you come to the point where you have laid yourself before God entirely to be His, then the fixedness of your resolve makes possible the peace of God, which passeth all understanding.

How shall I get this peace of God? The

prophet Isaiah says, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee." Perfect peace is then inseparably connected with perfect trust. And it is so even in society. Let me appeal to the family. How long would the wife have peace if she did not trust her husband? How long would the husband have peace if he did not trust his wife? How long would partners in business have peace in business relations if they did not trust each other. The whole basis of society is trust, and if trust is destroyed society falls into ruin. How much more is it so in our relations with God. There can be no peace in mind and heart and will unless there is trust in God. What is trust? It is simply dependence on truth. Look at the etymology of the word; true, truer, truest—trust. Why do I trust God? Because He is the truest being in the universe. Why do I trust you? Because I know you to be a true man or a true woman. The knowledge of your truth leads to trust. How then shall I get more trust in God? By getting more knowledge of God.

The condition of perfect trust is perfect knowledge of God. Many people try to get perfect trust by looking somewhere else but to God Himself; but there is one little verse in the Psalms that has a world of wisdom in it on this subject. It is Psalm ix, 10, "They that know

Thy name will put their trust in Thee." Notice about that verse, first, that knowledge and trust are inseparably linked, and secondly, that if we have a true knowledge of God we will trust Him, that is to say, unconsciously and involuntarily, just as you trust a true man or a true woman. You do not exercise your will about it, but when you come to know another person to be perfectly trustworthy, you cannot help trusting such a trustworthy person. Parents sometimes say to me, "How shall I get my little girl to trust me more? I tell her, 'you do not trust me as you ought to,' and she says, 'I know it mother, but I cannot help it?'" Poor child, what is the reason that she does not trust her mother! It is because she knows that her mother is not to be trusted. A mother, for instance, wants a child to be quiet while she is gone on an errand, and she says, "My dear child, if you will be quiet, I will bring you some sweets when I come back," but she has not the slightest idea of doing as she says; and when she returns she makes some shallow apology, such as "Oh, I forgot." The instinct of the child reads through the deceit, and the parent ought to blame herself, if she blames anybody, for the distrust of the child. The fact is that your child knows you too well to trust you. If you want the trust of a child

never violate exact truth. Be all that you pretend to be. Do all that you promise to do. Never give your word without strictly fulfilling it, and your child, even though it may be disobedient, will trust you and cannot help it. There will be involuntary trust.

If you look up to God, if you know Him, if you get acquainted with Him, if you understand how perfectly true and boundlessly faithful He is, you will trust him and you cannot help it. So instead of picking your experience to pieces, and wondering why you do not trust more, just take God's way and resolve that you will know Him more. Get better acquainted with your heavenly Father, and see how, without meaning it, without, perhaps, being conscious of it, your trust goes out toward him as naturally as waters flow out from a spring.

So we come to the last question—how shall I get more *knowledge* of God? See how very simple is the train of thought suggested by the text. First, there is the peace of God to keep your heart and your mind and your will, and secondly, that peace is inseparably connected with trust; and thirdly, trust is inseparably connected with more knowledge of God. The vital question is, then, how shall I know God better? And I have just two answers to that, very simple and very brief. There are two

ways in which to know God better. One is to know Him through His word, and the second is to know Him by prayerful walking with Him. The word of God and the walk with God will make you acquainted with God.

Many in these days tell us that we cannot know anything about God through his word, even if there be a God ; that nature is a sufficient revelation of God, and that we can learn all that we need to know about God through nature. Suffice it to say in reply, that while nature can give us hints that God is all-powerful and all-wise, and while there are even hints of God's goodness in nature, there are also dark things that makes it look as if God might not be a good God ; and if we had to interpret God by nature alone, we should be in doubt about his moral character and attributes. You could never infer the forgiveness of God from nature because nature never forgives. If you cut your hand with a sharp instrument it may heal by degrees, but there will be a scar there. If you jump off, or fall off, a precipice, you will be dashed in pieces, no matter how sorry you are for your carelessness or rashness. Nature never forgives, and if we had only nature to judge God by, we should know nothing about God's moral attributes. But God's word is his complete revelation of himself. It was given to supplement

and correct the revelation of nature, and the revelation that is in your mind and heart and conscience of what God is. You are made in his image, and though the image is shattered, yet like a shattered mirror, every fragment of which reflects the light, you still reflect God. But we get no perfect idea of God except from his word. In that word the precious Christ appears and says, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." As you watch the Saviour and trace his life, you get an idea of what God is as you never could otherwise, and, knowing Him, you will come to trust Him.

There is another way of knowing God, and that is, walking with Him. If you walk through these streets with a friend arm-in-arm, and hear his converse in your ear, you have no doubt of his companionship. Enoch and Noah walked with God, and they had no doubt of God's presence. It was as real, as substantial to them, as the presence of any friend whom they saw, and with whom they conversed. And, blessed be God, there are people who have had no education, who could not construct a sentence grammatically, who can scarcely find their way even through the word of God by their own unaided efforts, but who are wiser than the princes of this world in their knowledge of God. Education tends to make us proud in mind, and

to lean to our own understanding, so that we get beyond the simplicity of the faith of little children. You are very wrong in seeking peace anywhere except in God. In Mrs. Fletcher's biography she tells of a convert who had a strange dream, that he was down in a very deep well in the night, and he looked up and saw a single star shining far above him, and it seemed to let down lines of silver light, that took hold upon him and lifted him up. Then he looked down, and he began to go down. He looked up, and he began to go up; and he looked down, and he began to go down again; and he found that by simply keeping his eye on that star, he rose out of the well, until his foot stood on the firm ground. A parable is in the dream. If you look down, you go down; if you look up, you go up. You will never find peace from looking downward and within. If you see yourself as you are, it will make you more unrestful and unhappy, and so the apostle says, "Looking away unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith." Get your eyes off yourself and on your Saviour, get them off your disease and on your physician, get them all off your own deficiency and unworthiness and weakness, and get them fixed on the sufficiency and merit and almighty strength of the Lord Jesus. Now, and here, turn your eyes to the Lord Jesus.

Seek no more to find comfort in doubt. Seek no more to find comfort in the purest object of human love. Seek no more to find peace in a will that is not settled on God. Just as the magnetic needle never rests till it turns to the pole, just as it keeps moving from side to side restlessly until it settles toward the Pole Star, so your heart and mind, and will, must only turn from side to side in restless disquiet, until you come to fix your mind on God, and your love on God, and your will on God, and then you will come to know what is the peace of of God, which passeth all understanding.

"Behold the ark of God,
Behold the open door ;
Oh, haste to gain that dear abode,
And rove my soul no more."

THE NEW BIRTH, NO MARVEL.

XI.

THE NEW BIRTH, NO MARVEL.

"Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again."—JOHN iii, 7.

TO one word in this text it would be well to give special heed—the word "*marvel.*" In all that has been said upon the new birth that word has generally been forgotten. If any doctrine of Holy Scripture is considered one of those mysteries into which it is impossible for us to penetrate—something far above us, and which, if accepted at all, must be simply accepted on the authority of the word of God, it is this doctrine of the new birth or birth from above. And yet it is of that very doctrine that our Lord says we ought not to marvel; whatever mystery may be connected with it, it is not to be thought strange that he should teach that no man can see or enter into the kingdom of God, without being thus born from above. And it is that precise thought to which I shall now ask very careful attention. I shall be as honest and candid with you as it is possible for me to

be, and I pray you to be as honest and candid with God and this truth, as it is possible for you to be.

Why, then, is it that this doctrine of the new birth, the birth from above, is not one at which men need to stumble or marvel?

1. Consider first that there is, in every man, that which *is radically wrong.* The word "radical" comes from a Latin word which means the root, and to say that every man is "radically" wrong, is to affirm that there is something from the root of our manhood upward and outward, through all its developments, that shows sin to be there. When, as a boy, I used in the winter to go out coasting, I found that I could slide down hill very easily, but never could slide up, unless I was drawn up. That led me to infer that, for some reason, it was easier to go down hill than to go up hill. There is a great power in the universe, called "gravitation." No man ever saw gravitation. It is not something that you can see or hear, or touch, or taste, or smell; yet it is a reality. How do you know that there is such a force? Gravitation is the tendency of a body toward a center. If I drop anything it falls; it does not rise. I may take a weight in my hand, and lift it up, but it is by an effort; but it needs no effort to let it fall or drop. It falls of its own

weight. So, although nobody has ever seen gravitation, we know that this force or attraction exists in nature, because we observe that whatever is loosened from its fastening, falls toward the center of the earth. You never saw anything ascend that had weight to it, unless it was drawn or raised up by some counteracting force.

Now, there is something in man that is like gravitation. There is the tendency to sin, which makes it easier to do wrong than to do right. As soon as we be born, and begin to live intelligently, we begin to go astray. We find that it requires an effort to do right, though it requires little or no effort to do wrong. We slide or fall into the wrong, but we never slide or fall into the right. To do right implies a resolute resistance against this moral gravitation that is in us. Therefore we say that there is something in every man that is radically wrong—something that from the roots of our being reaches upward and outward, until it affects the tiniest twig of our growth, and shows that we are by nature "evil, and only evil continually."

2. It follows, then, in the second place, that there *must be some radical change* if we are to be like God and dwell with God and be happy with him forever. There must be some radical

change ; that is, the change must reach, like the evil, down to the roots of our being. It must affect the whole man. If your watch does not keep good time, you may change the hands and set it right, but in half a day, perhaps less, it is wrong again. If the watch stops altogether, you may set the hands exactly with the clock in the Victoria Tower, but in a moment the hands fail to tell the right time. You must reach the evil by applying the remedy from within. The difficulty is in the inside, and the inside must be remodeled and repaired. If a man who raises fruit finds a tree in his garden that yields very poor fruit—that, in fact, never has a perfect apple, or pear, or whatever it may be, on its branches—he cannot remedy it by cutting off a branch here or there. The next harvest time the fruit will be of the same quality as before. The only way to remedy such a difficulty is to put in grafts. He takes a scion from a better class of trees, and inserts it as a graft in the old tree, and by and by there will develop a branch that will bear good fruit—fruit that is eatable. The fruit-grower must put some life into that tree, or else he will not get good fruit. He must bring somewhat from outside, and introduce it into the tree, and depend upon the growth of the new scion or graft to yield an improved harvest.

3. No man *can radically change himself.* If every man is radically wrong, and needs to be made radically right, he must look to a Higher Power to effect a radical change. The word "disposition" suggests a great truth. It is from the same root as the verb "to dispose." Our disposition is what, in us, *disposes us to this or that course.* We say that such a one has "an amiable disposition," because disposed to be amiable ; or that such another has "a hateful disposition," because disposed to say and do malicious things ; or that another has "an angry disposition," because disposed to get easily angered, or "a patient disposition," because disposed to bear suffering or sorrow without murmuring.

It will be seen at once that the difficulty in any man's changing himself lies in his disposition. He is not disposed to do right, to be a child of God, to submit himself to the righteousness of Jesus Christ ; and this indisposition constitutes the great obstacle. It is the disposition itself that needs the change, and yet it is the disposition itself that is opposed to such change ; and such facts in our very being prove without question that no man can radically change himself. Here is a greedy man, an avaricious man ; he gets all the money that he can, and keeps all that he can get. He has no

disposition to give, to impart. Like the horse-leech's daughter, he cries, "Give! give!" He always wants more than he has, and never inclines to give anything to others. If you try to persuade him to be a benevolent man, what is the difficulty? It is that he is not disposed to be benevolent. You can bring no motive to bear upon such a man that shall make him a different man, because his very heart and soul are poisoned by his greediness. You have no leverage, because the disposition to be different is lacking.

Reformation does not reach the core of our difficulty. Some people have been accustomed to commit certain sins, and give up those sins, and therefore they think they are very much better. It may be so in the eyes of men, and in their own eyes; but so long as a man is not touched by the Holy Spirit of God, he may simply move from one kind of sin which has lost its charm to another that has a fascination for him. Sometimes one who has indulged his appetites and passions finds them wearing out, becoming dull like a weapon that has been ground down, until there is no blade left, and so he forsakes old lusts and passions that once gratified him, but no longer can, for new lusts and passions that retain power to yield him sinful pleasure. Sometimes a young man, when he

gets older, leaves the sins of his youth for other sins of his manhood, and when he gets to be an old man he leaves the sins of early youth and maturer manhood for the sins of old age; for even old age has its peculiar temptations and its peculiar indulgences. You can never safely infer that you are better, in the sight of God, because you have changed the field, or form, or sphere of your sinful indulgences. Again, one might give up a certain sort of sin because it is not respectable in the eyes of men, because it lowers their respect for him and his respect for himself. A man, for instance, gives up intoxicating drink simply because he wants to be a respectable man and succeed in business. Another gives up profane swearing because he cannot be a gentleman and swear, and because he wants to go into polite society. The secret motive that leads one to give up a bad habit has much to do with the virtue of reformation, and, if the motive be not such as God approves, and such as is pleasing in His sight, what does the reformation amount to? You may take a vessel of metal, and change its form, but you cannot change the nature of the metal. If it is of brass, you may cast it into a new shape, but it will be a brass vessel still. If it is an iron vessel, however recast, it will remain an iron vessel still. And not until you can take an iron

vessel and change it into a silver one, or a brazen vessel and change it into a golden one, can you radically change your character. You may change the outward life, and the form and the complexion of the sin, and yet remain at the root the same man or woman still in the sight of God.

4. If, then, there be a radical wrong, and there needs to be a radical change, and the man cannot radically change himself, the only being in the universe that can change him throughout *is the God Who made him.* This is why the Bible calls this a re-creation. It is as stupendous a work as the original creation, and to re-create demands the same power that originally created. The same creative hand that made this world must change it, if it is changed essentially ; and the same power that made a man must make the man anew, if he is ever made anew. That is the simple doctrine of the new birth, and that is practically all that there is in it. God therefore calls it "new birth," or "birth from above."

Now, what is birth ? Birth is the *beginning of life*, the starting-point of existence. Birth is the beginning of the forming of character and of habits. Birth is the beginning of the use of the organs of the body, and of the exercise of the powers of the mind. What is the

new birth, or the birth from above? It is spiritually beginning life again, and in a different fashion; beginning to experience new joys and motives in the soul; starting on a new walk, from a new beginning to a new termination by a new path; having a new life in God. That is the new birth. You may take any other term to express it, but that is the idea. It is beginning anew, not in one respect, but in all respects. It is going back to a new starting-point and taking a new direction, setting your face against sin and toward God and holiness.

Let it then be repeated, on the authority of the Holy Scriptures and the Holy Spirit of God, that no man or woman on earth can ever accomplish a change like that, unaided by God Himself.

5. If there is something radically wrong in you, and it needs to be radically changed, and you cannot accomplish that radical change yourself, and only God can accomplish it if it is done, then it follows that *either God must do that work for you*, and without you, or *He must do it with your consent;* and certainly God never saves a human soul without the consent and co-operation of that human soul. Man is not a mere machine. If I have a watch that does not keep time, and I take it to the watchmaker for repairs, the watch gives no consent in the case, and has

none to give. The watchmaker takes it to pieces, finds where the difficulty lies, and remedies it, and the watch is perfectly passive, has nothing to say or do, for it has no intelligent, voluntary nature with which to consent or co-operate. Any other kind of machinery which is out of order is repaired by the engineer or the mechanic without its own voice or consent. But man was made in the image of God, and that image partly remains to man, even after the fall, in the independent power of thought and choice. I say, with great reverence, that God respects the creatures that He has made, and the consequence is that He does not, and will not, deal with a human being as you would with a machine, which, if it needs repair, you remodel, and which, if you cannot make anything out of it, you do not hesitate to smash in pieces. When God sees a man or a woman behaving in a sinful way, living a sinful life, and cherishing a sinful heart, no doubt the power of God might change such man or woman into a holy being, somewhat as a man changes a damaged machine into a more perfect mechanism; but God never will do it, because He will not treat a human soul as though it were a mere piece of machinery. The Creator respects the mind, capable of thought; and the heart, capable of love; and the conscience, capable of judging;

and the will, capable of choosing ; and therefore He puts salvation before us as a something to be chosen, accepted, appropriated. You could not earn it, obtain it, work it out ; but you can *take* it, and it never will be yours if you do not.

In the sixth chapter of John we are confronted with these mysteries. Jesus Christ says, "No man can come unto Me except the Father which hath sent Me *draw* him." That is only one side of it. No man is ever saved if God does not draw him to Himself. On the other side, Christ says, "All that the Father giveth Me shall *come* unto me." That is the other side. *God draws: you come.* Christ says, in the fifth chapter of John, "The scriptures testify of Me, and yet ye *will not come* unto Me that ye might have life." The perversity of men is a strange thing. They will sometimes take up this precious Bible, and say, "I do not see that I have any responsibility. Christ said to Nicodemus, 'Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.' I cannot bring myself into a new existence and start myself in a new history. I do not see that I am responsible for it." Yet on the opposite page of this very same book is another version of the same matter ; for, in the first chapter and the twelfth and thirteenth verses, we read : "To as many *as received Him*, even to them that believed on His name, He gave *power*

to become the sons of God." What voluntary blindness is that which has an open eye to see the declaration of God's sovereignty, and yet a blind eye for the declaration of man's responsibility? Chemists sometimes take the purest and most fragrant herbs, and obtain from them the most deadly poisons. A perverse reader of Scripture is a kind of chemist who, out of the very plants and blooms of God's garden, distills most dangerous and most poisonous juices. Within the compass of the same verse we read: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." "God works in you to will and to do," that is one side of it. But you must work out, to the end, your own salvation; that is to say, you are to co-operate with God. Though you cannot buy or earn salvation, you can take or accept it. God buys it, with the precious blood of Jesus Christ; and he offers it to you freely, but he will not compel you to accept it and be saved. You must accept salvation for yourself. If I understand the Scriptures, that is the plain teaching of the Word of God.

Let me illustrate this responsibility of the sinner. Suppose that you are in a house which is on fire. You are in a room on the ground floor, and the key is inside. In such a case you

can wait there, until you think it unsafe to wait longer, and then you can unlock the door and go out. Suppose, on the other hand, that the key is not on the inside, but that the door is locked, and the person who has the key has gone away, and there is no way out but through that locked door. In that case you must either be let out, or stay there and perish. But suppose again, that although you are in that room, and the key is on the outside, there is a friendly hand on the key, and if you but call and ask that the door may be unlocked it will be, and you can escape. You see, the three supposed cases are quite different. In the first you have the power of release in your hands, and may go out when you please. In the second case the power of release is in another's hand, and you have no choice but to wait. In the third instance, however, the power of release is, indeed, in another's hand, but the *power to call* is your own, and the call will bring release. You are in the house of doom. You have not the key out of it, and cannot escape when and as you please. Nor is there a despotic being, in whose hands is the key, and who is where you cannot reach him, in which case you might, in helpless fatalism, say, "I can do nothing; it is of no use even to cry, or pray, or ask for deliverance." The fact is, a loving, gracious God has the key to that house

of doom, and He says, "You have only to ask of me, and I will give you deliverance."

I am quite aware that I am treading on delicate and difficult ground, for no man on earth can explain the wonderful way in which these two great truths are harmonized. God Himself never attempts to harmonize them. He presents the truth in both its aspects, and we are to submit to His teaching, and give up the attempt to explain the mystery. But it is perfectly plain to me that God treats every human being as capable of thought, love, and choice; and the fact that He *puts salvation before us as something to be accepted*—a free gift, but something to be accepted—shows that He does not propose to force it upon an unwilling soul.

6. One step more. If what has been said be true, then *if God withdraws from you, or if you withdraw from God* in such a way that you no longer will or can accept His free gift, your salvation becomes impossible. This is the most solemn ground that I ever touch in preaching the gospel. And I feel very solemn as I tread here. No one can present such thoughts as these without a sense of shrinking; yet fidelity to God and souls demands that I should tell the whole truth. If salvation is something to be given by God and accepted by man, and if both God's giving and man's accepting are necessary

to salvation, answer me this question. If God withdraws the gift, or if you have no longer the will or the capacity to take the gift, how is salvation, for you, possible?

Let us then ask, first, *Does God ever withdraw from a human soul?* Once a member of my church, an aged woman who was dying, sent for me. She was very old, but her husband was still older than she, and at that time little short of ninety years of age. I had been very much troubled in mind about him, and had been to talk with him about his own soul, and had offered prayer with him; and she knew that I was very anxious about him, and sent for me, and from her own dying bed said to me, very solemnly, "Pastor, I am afraid that my husband sold himself to the devil forty years ago." And then she told me one of the saddest stories I ever heard. She said that at that time he was a member of the State Legislature, and was very much moved about his own soul; that his pastor and many others came to see him and begged him to give himself up to Christ and accept Him as a Saviour; and that she herself pleaded and prayed with him. He said to her, one night, "Wife, I have a scheme to carry through the Legislature. It would not do for me to carry that scheme through, if I were a Christian man. I am going to see that through, and then I will

repent and accept Christ as a Saviour." He carried the scheme through ; but, as she said to me, *from that day he had never apparently had any desire to be a child of God.* That was the end of all penitence and longing for Christ, and readiness to accept Christ on his part. He deliberately chose, in the crisis of his history, to carry an iniquitous and dishonest scheme through the Legislature, and purposed afterward to turn from his iniquity and become a Christian. But he grieved the Spirit of God, and hardened himself against God. Does God ever withdraw Himself from a human soul ? I pray God I may do no dishonor to His grace when I say that I have no more doubt that God sometimes withdraws Himself from a human soul than I have that a human soul hardens itself against God. There is nothing more solemn in the whole Word of God than the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. Let me read two or three verses : " When they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful ; but became vain in their imagination, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man and to birds and four-footed beasts and creeping things." Verse 24 : " Wherefore *God also gave them up*

to uncleanness." Then in the twenty-sixth verse: "From this cause *God gave them up* to vile affections." Then in the twenty-eighth verse: "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, *God gave them over* to a reprobate mind." This is the one place in the Bible where this awful truth is taught most fully. Three times over it is here said that "*God gave them up*," or "gave men over," and each repetition of this truth is stronger than that which went before. First, God gave them up unto *uncleanness*—that is, he suffered them to sin and commit iniquity. The second statement is that God gave them over unto *vile affections*—that is, he left them to habits of sin and to the deliberate choice of their own lusts. But the third statement is that *God gave them over to a reprobate mind.* What is a reprobate mind? It is a mind that justifies the sin that a man has been committing, and that throws the responsibility for sin on God. It is a mind that perverts the conscience and the reason into the upholding and vindication of iniquity. And when God, who has given one up to uncleanness and then to vile affections, also gives one over to a reprobate mind, that is the last "giving up" that is possible. God then *abandons that soul to destruction:* and let me add, with awful solemnity, that man, thus given over by God, is

already as truly damned as if he were in hell!

This is very plain language. I feel constrained to deal honestly with souls. If you, by perversity, get where God gives you over and withdraws His providence and His Spirit from restraining you; if God no longer touches you by providence or grace, you are a lost man, hopelessly lost.

Why did God give these people over to uncleanness, then to vile affections, then to a reprobate mind? This passage tells us. In the first place, we read that they "held the truth in unrighteousness;" and the original means that they *held down* the truth in unrighteousness. If a man tries to rob you on the street, and you can get him down and hold him down till help comes, you do with the robber what these people did with the truth. God gave them a certain measure of truth, and they tried to get the truth down, as it were, and to hold it down and stifle its voice, so that they might not hear its witness against their wrongdoing. We are told also that "they *did not like* to retain God in their knowledge. They sought to get the knowledge of God out of their minds, to shut their eyes to the evidence that there is a God. They tried in every way to blind their own vision to the sight of God, and stop their own ears to the remon-

strance of God, and harden their own hearts to the touch of God ; and so God found it necessary, however reluctantly, to give them over, and say, "Let them alone."

Do men ever *give themselves over?* What does the Apostle Paul mean, when he says in the fourth chapter and the nineteenth verse of the Epistle to the Ephesians, "Who, being past feeling, have *given themselves over* unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness." What is it to be "past feeling?" Suppose the eye no longer has sight, or the ear has no longer hearing, or the hand has no longer the sense of touch. It is *past feeling.* Suppose the conscience is "seared with a hot iron." If you took an iron at white heat and applied it to the eye, you would burn the eye into total and fatal blindness and insensibility, and no power, short of God, could give you that eye back sound and healthy. If you habitually apply sin to the injury of your conscience, you burn your conscience into total and final insensibility ; and the moral sense will never fully awaken until it awakens in the future state.

This is not preaching any theology but the theology of common sense. There are some who refuse to hear the testimony of the Bible as to things which are nevertheless going on right before them. Hundreds of people in London

are doing to-day just what the heathen did, about whom Paul wrote in the Epistle to the Romans. Here is a man, for instance, who trifles with intoxicating drink. He sees himself getting under its control more and more, and finds it more and more difficult to get along without it ; he finds also that, whereas he once used it in what he calls "moderation," he now takes too much, as he confesses, and gets tipsy and drunk, because it is going beyond his own control. He tries for a few days, perhaps, to let it alone, but the old appetite has tremendous power over him, and so he goes back to his cups. Up to a certain point he is like a man whose hand is on the helm of a vessel, and who can steer his ship, by a determined effort, out of danger. But he allows himself to drift on and sweep deliberately farther and farther toward the vortex of the awful maelstrom of destruction, until at last he finds himself where, even if his hand is on the helm, the helm does not guide the vessel, for the vessel no longer obeys its own rudder! Have you not seen those things ? And are there not hundreds in this city, to-night, and may there not be some in this house that God has already given up to uncleanness, and even to vile affections ; and perhaps He is now deliberating whether it shall be necessary to give them

over finally to reprobate minds and seal them as lost souls?

Preaching the truth is an awful business. It is glorious to tell of a free salvation, but it is terrible to be compelled to tell men and women that, even while you are preaching to them, they are, perhaps, hardening themselves fatally and hopelessly against Almighty God!

7. The concluding point in this argument is now reached. First, we saw that everybody is radically wrong. Secondly, that everybody needs to be made radically right. Thirdly, that nobody can radically change himself. Fourthly, that only God can change him. Fifthly, that God will not save a human soul without the acceptance of salvation. Sixthly, that if God no longer approaches a soul, or the soul is no longer willing or able to accept God's salvation, the lost state must remain eternal. Let us hear, then, the conclusion of the whole matter. "*Now is the accepted time.*" As you sit here you say to yourself, "I marvel whether I am included among those whom God has given over, or who have so hardened themselves against God as that there can no longer be a response even to the grace of God." How can you find out what your condition is? Is there any response in your mind and heart to the truth to-night? Is

your conscience giving you disquietude? Have you a sense of restlessness? Do you feel as if God were talking to you? And do you feel as though you would like to turn round and face God, and begin another life? Then you have so far a proof that God has not yet finally given you over, and that you have not yet hardened yourself into fatal insensibility. And I say to you, "*Now* is the accepted time," for not one of you can tell whether you shall to-morrow remain sensible to God's approach. Not one of you can tell whether, if you now harden yourself against the simple entreaty of the truth and the Spirit, which is also the appeal of God, you may not be sacrificing the last hope and chance for your own salvation.

Now, do not turn your ears away, for we are in the presence of God; give, yet a moment, more careful attention. You go into a blacksmith's shop, when he is about to give a new shape to a piece of iron. He takes the iron and puts it in the furnace, and he sends a blast through the furnace, and then he pulls out the iron at white heat, and puts it on the anvil, and the sledge hammer comes down upon it, and molds it into the desired form. If he allows the iron to get cold, he must put it back into the furnace, and make it hot again. He cannot mold cold iron without danger of breaking

it. He may a dozen times heat the iron, and let it cool, and again put it back and heat it, and although the iron may be somewhat injured by the repeating of this process, it can still be made into the desired form. But *God never repeats His process with a disobedient soul.* I am very desirous that you should grasp this thought. If a truth is impressed upon your mind to-night, and you reject that truth, it can never be impressed upon your minds in the same way again. This is not limiting the power of God, except as the power of God is limited by the conditions of the human mind. Man is not a machine. He is not like a piece of iron. He cannot be put through the same process a dozen times, and receive an impression the last time as he would have done the first. Truth depends for its power largely upon its novelty; and an argument when presented as a new argument, with new illustrations and appeals, has a certain power upon us. But that argument, repeated to-morrow with the same illustrations and the same appeals, will be found to have lost its power, because it has lost its novelty. There is one exception to this law. If you hear an appeal of truth or duty, and *yield* yourself to it by obedience, you keep your mind tender and receptive, so that the same truth presented in the same way again, will still have effect upon you,

perhaps even more than on the previous occasion; because your surrender of yourself to the truth will increase your sensibility to impression, and so what the appeal would have lost by mere repetition is overbalanced by the gain in your receptiveness. Your obedient nature, your disposition to obey, have opened all the avenues of your being, and the truth has thus more power on you, perhaps, the second time than it had the first, because you are more open to its appeal. If, on the other hand, you hear the Word of God and reject it, you shut your eyes in a measure; you are hardening your heart, and when the truth is put before you again in the same form, it has not half the former power, perhaps no power at all. God may make an impression on you afterward, but He must take another way to do it; another truth to do it with, another form of appeal, argument, illustration. Every time you hear the gospel preached, and refuse its appeals, you narrow down the circle of divine influences, within which, for you, salvation lies. Right in this house, before me, are men and women who are making their own salvation more and more impossible, because they hear the Word of God without obeying. Evangelists, among the outcast and degraded classes, find that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of

God before hundreds of people do who sit in the sanctuary every Sunday. Why? Because these respectable church-goers get *gospel-hardened*, and outsiders are only *sin-hardened*, and it is practically worse to be gospel-hardened than to be sin-hardened. Nothing makes one so impervious to the impressions of the gospel as to hear and not obey; and, therefore, if you could get into this tabernacle thousands of people who have very seldom, if at all, heard the gospel before, and are living in the vilest of sin, and will let me preach this same sermon to them, hundreds more of them will be ready to accept Jesus Christ than are likely to do so from among this audience of habitual hearers. This is an awful statement, but awfully true. The very hearers that are paying no attention to God's message, who care nothing about it, and lightly dismiss it, show *by the way in which they treat* the truth, how near they are to a hardened state! The very fact that one can hear God speak such solemn words, and care little or nothing about it, is the one alarming feature.

It is not in my power to lead one of you to Christ. If I should plead till midnight it would not affect a soul, unless moved by the Spirit of God. But I entreat you with tearful tenderness, if there is one of you that feels a drawing toward God, and yet has never ac-

cepted salvation, that you will not run the risk of being given over to a reprobate mind, or of hardening your heart against God, by even saying, "Just this once, go Thy way; go Thy way." Let every unconverted soul say, "I will, by God's help, now take Jesus Christ to be my Saviour. I will not trifle with this matter of salvation. I will not turn away from God. I will not give the Word of God an opportunity to harden me any further. I will not give Satan an opportunity to withdraw me from the pale of divine influences. I will not give my own treacherous heart an opportunity, even by the postponement of my own salvation. I will turn about. I will go and say to God, "Father, I have sinned against Thee; I have neglected Thee; I have hated Thy reproof; I have been given over to sinful habits and vile affections. Give me not over to a reprobate mind."

This is a favored place for souls to turn to God. There are in this congregation more praying souls, probably, than in any other congregation gathered in Christendom to-night, people who daily and hourly pray to God for souls. In some room in this great building prayer is going on almost every hour of the day. While I have been here meditating this sermon, and praying for power to preach to you, I have heard all around in these various

rooms the sound of prayer and singing. What does that mean? They have been praying for you, praying that the Word of God might have fruit in human souls, praying that this might be the birth-hour of some into the kingdom of God. And, blessed be God, salvation is free and full and ready for you. Are you ready for it? I pray you, do not leave this house to-night without a blessing. In the schoolroom below I propose to meet all inquiring people, or those who desire now to make their salvation sure. I want to meet you there. We will have a few words of prayer, and of personal counsel about immediate surrender to the Lord Jesus Christ. Let everyone who desires salvation stay; and let us, in the presence of God and with His help, settle to-night this great matter of eternity!

THE RICHES OF GRACE.

XII.

THE RICHES OF GRACE.

"The unsearchable riches of Christ."—EPHESIANS iii, 8.

THERE is a universal desire on the part of human beings to be rich; the instinctive love of gain seems to be a part of our common humanity. The Apostle Paul, in this Epistle to the Ephesians, sets before us the vast riches of God, and tells us how we may be made partakers of this divine wealth. This epistle is especially given to the exhibition of these infinite riches of grace. There are six passages here that I will read, at the beginning, in order that you may understand what is to be said. In the seventh verse of the first chapter we read: "In Whom"—that is in Christ—"we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sin, *according to the riches of His grace*, wherein He hath abounded toward us." Then in the eighteenth verse, "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what *the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the*

saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe." Then in the second chapter and the fourth verse, "God, Who is *rich in mercy*, for His great love wherewith He loved us." Then in the seventh verse, "That in the ages to come He might show the *exceeding riches of His grace* in His kindness toward us, through Jesus Christ." Then follows the text: "That I should preach among the Gentiles the *unsearchable riches of Christ*." Again, in the third chapter and the sixteenth verse, "That He would grant you, according to *the riches of His glory*, to be strengthened with might by His spirit in the inner man."

When you remember that this epistle consists of only six chapters and notice these repeated references to God's riches, and especially the form of speech used with regard to them, you will feel, with me, that this whole letter of Paul is intended to set forth these boundless riches to God. In that expression in the second chapter, "the exceeding riches of His grace," the word translated "exceeding" is that from which comes the English word, "hyperbole," applied to exaggeration. The word literally means, "to shoot beyond the mark," and expresses therefore the idea of excess, Paul means by it that, though you use the utmost wealth of language, you cannot shoot

beyond the mark : the riches of God exceed all power of language to express. In the words of the text, "the unsearchable riches of Christ." "Unsearchable" literally means riches that can never be explored. You not only cannot count or measure them, but you can form no estimate of them ; and you not only can form no estimate of them, but you never can get to the end of your investigation. There is a boundless continent, a world, a universe of riches, that still lies before you, when you have carried your search to the limits of possibility. I feel as though I had a theme, about which no man ought to speak. An archangel's tongue could do no justice to it. If the intelligence of a cherub were united with the love of a seraph, such intelligence and such love together would vainly seek to set before us the subject that we are now to consider. I would not touch the theme, but for the hope and confidence that, as I labor in my human infirmity to reach the greatness of it, my very failure may show how wonderful it is.

In order that we may consider the subject in such a way as both to remember it and bring out its richest features, I ask your attention to two departments of thought, both suggested by the epistle itself : first, this riches of grace, as seen *in our inheritance in God ;* and secondly,

this riches of grace, as seen *in God's inheritance in us.* The foundation for the first thought is found in the first chapter and eleventh verse: "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance;" and the foundation for the second is found in the same chapter and the eighteenth verse: "The riches of the glory of *His inheritance in the saints*"— not the saints inheritance in Him, but "His inheritance in the saints." I will say, in advance, that this second thought is perhaps the most overwhelming conception of grace presented from the beginning of Matthew to the close of the Apocalypse—that not only should a saint be permitted to be rich in God, but—oh, marvelous and incomprehensible thought!—that God should estimate Himself to be made richer by the love and faith of a believer, so that God should consider that in you and in me He obtains an inheritance!

First, as to *our inheritance in God*, look at what marvels this epistle presents as to that inheritance. First, see what God does to give us this inheritance. The apostle says, in the second chapter and first verse: "And you, who were dead in trespasses and sins, hath He made alive." In the fifth verse He repeats it: "Even when we were dead in sins hath made us alive together with Christ." We who once were dead in trespasses and sins are made heirs of God;

and, in order that we might be heirs, God begins by creating us anew in Christ Jesus, just as though He had taken dead elements from the earth, and made a man anew "out of the dust of the ground." Sin had slain us, and we were dead to God, and God had first to make us alive in Christ that we might be able to receive the eternal inheritance. Then, having made us alive, He took us into his family, and he gave us what Paul calls, in the fifth verse of the first chapter, "the adoption of sons"; "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children," or sons, "by Jesus Christ." "Adoption of sons" is one word in the Greek, and means sonship, or the place and the privilege of a son. When we were dead He made us alive, and then, having made us alive, He gave us the place of sons, for who could properly be an heir but a son? God does not take an alien and will His property to that alien. When He makes an heir He first makes him a son. The alien is put into His family of grace, and, of course, becomes an heir because he is a son. Everything involved in being a son is represented by that word "sonship."

A like thought is expressed in other language, when Paul says: "You who sometimes were afar off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." This probably refers to the cleansing of the

leper. To the Jew the leper was the walking parable of death and judgment. When he went anywhere he had to go with bowed head, with distinctive garments, with a long staff in his hand, and had to cry "Unclean, unclean," to prevent anyone from coming into contact with him. He could not enter even into the court of Israel, much less into the court of the priests; and, if God removed his leprosy, he had to be examined by the priest outside of the camp, "afar off," as it were, from the holy place; then when he was pronounced clean, and the sin offering or trespass offering was made in his behalf, he was led by the priest to the tabernacle of the congregation and permitted to enter into the court of Israel. This is another figure to represent our preparation for heirship. We were lepers, outside the camp, having no privileges in the court of God's people, and God took away our leprosy, cleansing us in precious blood, and then brought us into the court of Israel and even into the court of the priests; yes, into the holiest place of all, for the veil had been rent in twain, so that we could come to the very presence of God, and put our hands on the blood-stained mercy seat! You see how the Bible exhausts all figures to express the marvels of this grace. I have preached both the terrors of the law, and the invitations of the gospel, as

faithfully as I know how ; and I propose now just to hold up the riches of grace in the confident expectation that to display those riches may attract some poor souls to the everlasting inheritance which is the glorious gift of God.

Another wonder about this rich grace is that having made us sons, as I have suggested, He made us heirs—"In whom we have received an inheritance." Among men a child ordinarily gets the property only when the father or the testator dies. As God never dies we are come into our inheritance jointly *with* the ever-living God Himself ! He bestows, not the universe upon us—that is too little for Him to give—He gives *Himself*. All the wisdom, all the knowledge, all the power, all the love—all the blessedness that is in God becomes ours in Jesus Christ; and, together with God, everything that God owns. This grand thought is too great for our apprehension—that the humblest believer here is going to share the very nature of God, which is the first and most glorious element in the inheritance—going to share the throne, the scepter, the crown of Jesus Christ, going to share the universe that God owns ; that is to say, there is nothing in God or His possessions that is not to contribute to the everlasting blessedness of the sons and heirs of God.

Another remarkable fact is this—that, having

made us alive, and given us the place of sons, and made us heirs, He pays us, in advance of the full redemption of our inheritance, the interests, or revenue of the estate. See in the first chapter in the thirteenth and fourteenth verses, "In Whom" —that is, in Christ—"also, after that ye believed ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise which is the earnest"—that is, the foretaste— "of our inheritance until"—that is, this side of —"the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory."

A minor, before his majority, receives, by the appointment of the testator, the revenue from the estate. Stocks are invested, land is rented, buildings are tenanted, and the income from all these investments, gathered in by the executors and administrators, is dealt out to prospective heirs during their minority, for their support, education, and enjoyment. And so, although we have not come to our majority yet, and have not entered fully upon our inheritance, we get the earnest or foretaste of it; the joys of Heaven are in anticipation brought down to earth. The apostle, laboring to express this thought, mixes up two figures in one sentence. He says, "We are sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise which is the earnest of the inheritance." The first figure is taken from the common practice of confirming a document by a seal; and

the second figure is taken from the practice of paying over to the minor the revenue of the estate before his majority. God says: "You were dead. I made you alive. You were an alien. I made you a son. You had no possessions in me. I made you an heir." Here is the document which is the title clear to mansions in the skies, and the Holy Ghost puts on His document His broad seal, and affixes to it the stamp of God; and if you ever doubt that you have an inheritance, look at that title and see the seal of the Holy Ghost. You do not suppose that the Holy Ghost seals a lie, putting His attestation to a false and misleading document, do you? If you have in your heart the love of God shed abroad, if you feel the hungering desire after God, if you love His worship, if you sing God's praise because your heart is full of thanksgiving, if you yearn to glorify the Master who died for you, if your passion for souls leads to exertion in their behalf, if your temptations are overcome in a higher strength, if you put forth your efforts to honor your Master who honored you by making you alive, making you a son, making you an heir—all this is the Holy Spirit putting His seal on the document and saying: "That is a child of God. Bear witness; there is the stamp of God upon Him." That seal itself becomes to a believer the most precious advance

payment in anticipation of his inheritance. Believers, how many of you have ever had the seal of the Holy Spirit put on your title to heavenly mansions? How many of you have received and enjoyed the earnest of your inheritance? Are not many of you living beneath your privileges, instead of cultivating communion and fellowship with Jesus by the Holy Ghost? Some of you are courting the world and its pleasures, living in the indulgence of some secret sin or the deliberate neglect of some known duty; and, in consequence, you have not the seal of the Spirit of God on your title, and are uncertain whether or not you are saved. Why not come up to the true level of your privileges? Why not claim the sealing of the Holy Ghost and the earnest of your inheritance? Every one of you may have that foretaste, and it is God's will that you should, and I may reverently say that it disappoints God when His children do not claim the fullness of this blessing.

The apostle expresses kindred ideas in other parts of this epistle. For instance, he says, in the first chapter, "that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God." How can one have such an experience as that, without recognizing in it the sealing of the Holy Ghost? And again he says in the fifth chapter, "Be not drunk with wine wherein is riot, but be filled with the

Spirit." It is not a privilege only, but a duty, to "be filled." It is not "You may be filled," not "You ought to be filled," not "It is your privilege to be filled," but an injunction—"Be filled"—as though you dishonor God, as indeed you do, if you are not filled. And then mark that wonderful promise to prayer, in the third chapter, about "Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." All these represent a part of your privileges and of the earnest of your inheritance.

As reference has been made to prayer, let me add that any praying disciple may command evidence that there is a God, and that he is in fellowship with Him. You need have no doubts. If you are a doubting disciple you are not really a praying disciple. You do not get the full benefit out of prayer if you have still questionings about God or your own state. If you hold daily communion with him in your chamber, and he touches you and you touch him, you will go through the world like a man who is continually encompassed in impregnable armor, and on your shield of faith Satan's fiery darts of doubt will be quenched. A boy went into the battle and was found without a helmet. Someone said to him, "Your head is unprotected." "No, it is not," he answered, "my mother laid her hands on it before I went to

the battlefield, and besought God to be with me." If God's hands are laid on your head, that head is helmeted ; if God protects you no arrow from the devil's bow can pierce your coat of mail.

We have now seen how we are made alive, then introduced into sonship, then declared heirs, then paid in advance the earnest of the inheritance. And now a word about the actual inheritance itself. It is said in the second chapter and the seventh verse—and it is one of the most remarkable verses in the New Testament —" That *in the ages to come* He might show the exceeding riches of His grace." It is not said, anywhere in the Bible, that *in the present age* God can show the exceeding riches of His grace. We may get a taste and foretaste of His grace here, but we must wait till the ages to come for the full display of that marvelous riches. There are some paintings that demand a whole gallery for their exhibition ; they are too large for a private house. The panorama on which is emblazoned the riches of God's graces takes a universe to hold it, and eternity to unroll it. In the ages to come God is going to show the exceeding riches of His grace. Let me use a very simple illustration of what I think God means ? Suppose that out of the streets round about this Tabernacle there is taken one of the very

worst of men, or—for I think we all feel that if a woman is bad she is worse than a man is—one of the worst of women. And, to make the case more startling, suppose her to have been born deformed—a cripple. She presents in herself the results of generations of crime and lust and strong drink. She is, in body and in soul, a leper, and she carries the leprosy of sin on her body, in the scars of iniquity, and her mind and heart and conscience, and will all show the awful fruit of sinful indulgence. Even her companions in sin hate her. She is passed by as a repulsive and loathsome object by everybody, even the members of her own family. She barely keeps a foothold in life, because she is surrounded by those who despise her. Her heart is full of malice. Her mind is a cage of unclean birds. She has almost petrified her conscience into insensibility, and she has no will except for evil doing. Now, suppose that to-night that woman has come into this Tabernacle, and hears the story of the riches of grace, and believes that this rich grace is for her, poor as she is, wretched as she is, foul as she is, despised as she is. We will further suppose that, right here and now, she opens her heart to the Lord Jesus Christ, and takes Him as her redeemer. Grace begins at once to work in her soul. Gradually she becomes transformed. Her temptations are

resisted, her evil habits are overcome, her evil dispositions are displaced, the love of God is shed abroad in her heart, her imagination and her memory are purified, her conscience quickened and strengthened. The effects are seen even in her body. Her complexion becomes clearer, there is a new light in her eyes, there is a new expression in her face. She goes on, for twenty, thirty, forty years, growing in grace, an astonishment to all who knew her in her sins. But her growth has only begun. You see some little of the riches of grace in her, but in order to show you the exceeding riches of that grace, God must transport you into the ages to come, and show you that poor, degraded, depraved soul after those ages to come have wrought on her their wonderful results. A thousand years hence behold that saint. She has then for a thousand years had a body like unto Christ's glorious body, without the taint of corruption. The scars of sin are all gone, the deformity and the disease and the repulsiveness have been displaced by the charms of everlasting beauty and everlasting youth. Not a thought has crossed her mind for a thousand years that might cause her to blush in the presence of infinite purity; not an affection or an emotion has swayed her heart, but such as rule in the heart of the infinite God. As to knowledge, she has been edu-

cated in the university of heaven for a thousand years. All the philosophers of Greece and Rome, all the ancient and modern sages and scholars together could teach her nothing. If you could gather all the knowledge of the ages of the past and the present, it would not be as a drop in the ocean, compared to what she knows by communication with angels and saints and God himself. Yet she is only at the beginning of her true history, though she has been in heaven for a thousand years; for a thousand years are an insignificant fraction to what is before her; and, at any stage of her future existence, there will still be an eternity before her, and at any stage of her future perfection there will still be before her an unattained perfection. Get where she will for height, there are boundless heights beyond; get where she will for progress there are endless paths beyond —growth infinite; eternal advance. Now we begin to see what God means when He says, "That *in the ages to come* He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Jesus Christ.?" You can never understand it here, do what you will. You must wait until this everlasting display of His grace, growing more glorious as the ages go by, unfolds its record to you amid the splendors of His throne.

II. Perhaps the most glorious part of our theme is yet to be presented, and that is "the riches of the glory of *God's inheritance in the saints.*" This is certainly among the most stupendous thoughts within the pages of the New Testament—that God should regard you and me as worthy to be made an inheritance for Himself! See what glimpses the apostle gives us into this subject. In the first place, he teaches us that God *buys* or purchases us for His inheritance, that He redeems His inheritance by precious blood. In the fifth chapter, Paul tells us that Christ "gave Himself for us as an offering to God for a sweet smelling savor." When God looked down on us we were slaves of sin, condemned by the law, victims of death and hell; and He first gave His own Son to buy us out of our bondage and captivity and spiritual death that He might introduce us into the privileges of the sons of God, and find in us an inheritance. Then, after this purchase, He proceeds to *make us anew* in Christ Jesus; that is, to make us fit to be His own inheritance. In the second chapter and tenth verse we are told, "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." The original word there is *ποίημα*, a poem, as though the Divine Artist were writing a poem full of the rhyme and rhythm of heavenly music, and took us for

the theme of the poem. We are His workmanship, His artistic product. God does not make anything imperfect ; when He makes you anew in Christ Jesus that means perfection for you in the future life.

So this brings me to the third point. As He bought us for an inheritance, and reconstructs us in Christ, He carries the work to perfection. One of the sweetest suggestions in the New Testament is wrapped up in this divine truth. A man dies and leaves to his son an estate, with an old house upon it in which the family had lived for many years. In passing by that estate some time after, you notice that the house is apparently being almost pulled down. They have torn off the old boards and shingles, they have taken down the half-dilapidated chimneys, they have cut out rotten floor timbers and base timbers : they have built up a new foundation, put in a bow window on the south exposure, and are building a large piazza round the east and north and west sides. The present owner is making it over, improving his inheritance. Is it not in some such way that God perfects His own dear children ! He sends to us afflictions, and they seem to tear us to pieces with sorrow and grief. God is only stripping off the rotten boards and shingles, and taking out the dead timbers. He is only remodeling and "improv-

ing His own inheritance ;" and because He loves us so much He takes such infinite pains with the old building to put in place of its corruption the glorious renovations of the Holy Spirit. That is why God deals with His own disciples oftentimes in a very painful way. He is seeking to make them completely over into the likeness of His dear Son.

Again, He who buys us for an inheritance, and makes us anew, and perfects us by the discipline of His grace, *comes and dwells in us.* He has built His house for a dwelling ; and He is going to be the inhabitant Himself. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of the Holy Ghost, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you ?" In the second chapter and twentieth verse : "are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone ; in whom all the building fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord, in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit." Am I not right in saying that this thought is unsurpassed for grandeur in the New Testament ? God buys us from sin, delivers us from captivity and condemnation, then He makes us over in Christ Jesus by the power of His grace, then He disciplines us by sorrow and suffering, and trial and temptation, until He has

perfected the building. Then He comes and dwells in it, and makes it a habitation of God.

And so, finally, He glorifies it. He could not dwell in it without glorifying it. But at last He is going to take this body of ours and make it like unto the body of Christ. He is going to take this soul of ours and wash it clean, not only saving it from the penalty, but from the power and dominion and presence of sin also, and make it a fit place for His glory to shine in, and for His glory to shine through. In the fourth chapter of Zechariah, we read of the wonderful candlestick, with the lamps that are burning in testimony on its branches. But when in Revelations you get a last glimpse of that golden candlestick the *lamps* are turned to *stars*. What were lamps on earth, have become stars in heaven, and these stars are held in the right hand of Jesus Christ. We think of Daniel, twelfth chapter and the second verse, "They that be teachers (margin) shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." If God takes these pains to perfect the building while we are on earth, what do you suppose will be its perfection when it is transplanted to the skies; when the last sign of sin and imperfection disappears, and when the light of a candle, and even sunshine itself is su-

perfluous, because His glory lightens it, and shines through the window with supernal splendor!

Even the great mind of the Apostle Paul, with all his learning and culture and philosophy, labors by the Holy Ghost to express this idea. Let me read, in conclusion, the last verses of the first chapter; and let us give good heed, and catch the idea of them if we may: "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened that ye may know what is the hope of His calling and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power"—or the energy of His might—"which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all." What does all this mean? That phrase, "According to the working of His mighty power," is the key. If I have a fabric that I want to measure, or a city that I need to take the

dimensions of, I must have a measuring reed or rod, like the man in Ezekiel's vision. God puts an infinite prospect before us and gives a measuring rule whereby to estimate it. What is that measuring rule? It is "*what God wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places*, far above all power, and dominion, and principalities, and every name that is named." God says: "If you want to know what I am going to do for you in the exceeding richness of my power and grace, here is the unit of measurement. When you can measure what I have done for my dear Son in raising Him from the dead and setting Him at my own right hand in the heavenlies, where even angels, principalities, and powers are under His feet, then you have the yard measure by which to estimate the infinite glory to which the saints are to be introduced."

I sink back exhausted, in the vain attempt to set before this congregation the greatest mystery of grace that I ever grappled with. I cannot remember in thirty years of gospel preaching ever to have been confronted with a theme that more baffled every outreach of thought, and every possibility of utterance, than the theme that I have now been attempting in the name of God to present.

I have, in Japan, a beloved daughter and son-in-law engaged in the work of missions to the heathen. That son-in-law was almost an idol in his family, and a general favorite, and he deserved to be, for he was amiable, considerate, loving, and unselfish. When he gave himself to the work of foreign missions, and proposed to go to the far East, the question was naturally asked, "How will he ever break away from his father and mother, his brothers and sisters, and especially from his aged grandparents?" We watched to see how God would support him as the time came, in 1888, for him to bid a long farewell to all he loved on that side of the sea. But he left on record, as his parting message, the words of the text, "Unto me who am less than the least of all saints is this grace given, that I should preach among the nations the unsearchable riches of Christ." He forgot all about the ties to be sundered, the great ocean to be crossed, the language to be mastered, and the strange people to be confronted; and the one thought that filled his mind was the inestimable joy and privilege of preaching among the nations the unsearchable riches of Christ. You need not shed any tears over such a man. He has got a glimpse of the infinite riches of God, and like one who knows that he has found exhaustless wealth, and is surrounded by awful

destitution and poverty, he yearns to go and scatter the coin of the Kingdom among the destitute and degraded peoples of a far-off land. He has never had a mournful moment since he turned his back on his own country. That is the spirit of every true missionary, and I bless God that in some faint measure I know what that joy is. Opportunities have more than once, in my life, apparently opened to me the door to possible wealth, if I would turn aside from the preaching of the gospel, or make a compromise with the world. It cost me nothing to turn my back on the prospect of riches, for I had a grander privilege. The infinite riches of God were at my disposal. I had the wealth of the gospel to scatter among poor souls. You that are yet wandering from Jesus, you do not know what a Saviour we have who believe! You do not understand what riches of grace and glory are in store for you also, if you repent and accept of Christ; and I feel it a great joy to stand here, and carry out and carry on the testimony of that blessed man of God, who preached here for so many years, and, like him, to press upon you the gift of God, which is found only in His dear Son.

In Bunyan's great allegory, in the House of the Interpreter, a man was seen raking among the dust and rubbish, to find coins or gems,

while above his head a celestial hand was stretched out with a crown set around with blazing jewels. "*Thou art the man!*" You are seeking amid the pleasures and treasures of this world a satisfaction that you will never find; and, while you are looking down, you need only look up and see God's hand stretched out, offering an eternal crown, every gem of which represents the riches of God. Will not you come to Christ now? Do not think of your sin. It is not too great for Him to save you, and the greater your sin the more He yearns to save you, because the greater is your need. And all that you have to do is to accept Him. He is God's free gift. These boundless riches are yours without paying a farthing, taking a step, making an effort, or waiting a moment. It is all yours, if you will hold out your hand and take it. Surely nothing can be added to the glory of this gospel, OF THE UNSEARCHABLE RICHES OF CHRIST!

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